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Friday May 29 1998

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Comment, page 12

On the nuclear precipice

Pakistan's bomb tests provoke fury and sanctions

Ian Black in London and Richard Galpin in Islamabad

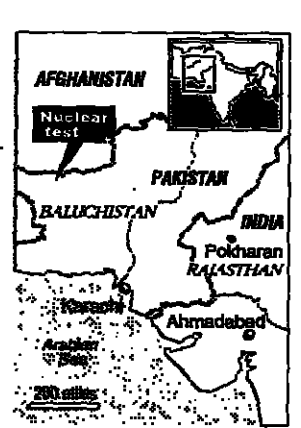
THE appalling prospect of a nuclear confrontation in one of the world's most volatile regions drew closer last night after Pakistan matched India with nuclear tests designed to show its neighbour and arch-rival that it too could produce and deliver a bomb.

Pakistan's move brought immediate sanctions and international condemnation at the undermining of faltering efforts to limit the spread of nuclear weapons.

Hours after the detonation of five nuclear devices, Pakistan's president, Rafiq Tarar, declared a state of emergency, citing a "threat by the external aggression to the security of Pakistan". The aggressor was not identified but Pakistan had earlier accused India of threatening to attack its nuclear installations.

The "successful" underground tests brought Pakistan into direct nuclear stand-off with India but without any of the safeguards and agreements that mitigated the worst dangers of the US-Soviet confrontation.

"We have settled the account of the nuclear blasts by India," the Pakistani prime minister, Nawaz Sharif, said.



In a televised address to the nation, referring to New Delhi's tests two weeks ago, Jubilant Pakistanis greeted the news by dancing and embracing in the streets and firing guns in the air.

In Washington, a grim-faced President Bill Clinton announced that the US was imposing new economic sanctions against Pakistan for ignoring pleas — including a personal one to Mr Sharif late on Wednesday night — to refrain from testing.

"I cannot believe we are about to start the 21st century by having the Indian subcontinent repeat the worst mistakes of the 20th century when we know it is not necessary to peace, to security, to prosperity, to national greatness or national fulfillment," Mr Clinton said.

But the US and the four other "official" nuclear powers — Russia, China, Britain and France — were blamed for failing to meet responsibilities under the nuclear non-proliferation treaty by cutting their own arsenals since the cold war ended.

"There needs to be a strategic global response to proliferation," said Dan Fiesch of the British-American Security Information Council. "You can't just deal with it regionally. This is not just a tactical problem containable to two countries."

New Delhi reacted calmly to the news from Islamabad. "India is ready to meet any challenge," the prime minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, said after meeting advisers.

And minutes after Mr Sharif offered to resume deadlocked peace talks with India, a senior Indian official said: "If they make an offer it will not be spurned."

There were also warnings that relations on the subcontinent are less stable than the old US-Soviet ties. "This replicates the possibilities for disaster that were enmeshed in the cold war confrontation," said Sean Howard, editor of Disarmament Diplomacy.

"There are constant border skirmishes. Kashmir is a powder keg and public opinion on both sides is very volatile. This has the potential for unimaginable horror at the end of the line. Millions of lives could slip away very quickly."

Such fears were dramatically illustrated earlier yesterday after Pakistan hauled New Delhi's high commissioner out of bed in Islamabad for a midnight dressing-down, saying it had received "credible information" of an Indian plan to attack its nuclear installations and warning that such an act would be met with "swift and massive retaliation". India denied the charge as "malicious and completely baseless".

Experts warned that both sides had shown hair-trigger reflexes that could quickly put them on a collision course again, notably over Kashmir. "I don't think they are up to the task of preventing a conventional conflict from accidentally slipping into a nuclear exchange," said David Albright of the Washington-based Institute for Science and International Security.

China expressed deep regret that its ally Pakistan had conducted the tests and said it felt uneasy about the nuclear race in South Asia. Japan said it was considering stiff sanctions. Australia said the first to take active punitive measures.



Activists in Lahore burn an Indian flag to celebrate Pakistan's announcement yesterday that it had carried out five nuclear bomb tests to match India's

'We will have difficulties, but if you have the strength there is no way we can fail'

Nawaz Sharif, Pakistan's prime minister

'They have vindicated our policy. India is ready to meet any challenge'

Atal Behari Vajpayee, India's prime minister

'I cannot believe we are about to start the 21st century by having the Indian subcontinent repeat the worst mistakes of the 20th century'

US president Bill Clinton



Girl, 15, was heart 'nurse'

Hospital denies nepotism and sacks 'under-age' part-timer

A SCOTTISH hospital provoked widespread astonishment yesterday when it emerged that a 15-year-old schoolgirl had been employed to perform heart monitoring duties.

Perth Royal Infirmary trained the girl, who worked for three hours each weekend in the cardiovascular unit, to operate an electrocardiograph monitor. Her duties involved going into wards to take readings for doctors by attaching electrodes to patients' chests, wrists and ankles.

To add to the anger of health unions, it emerged that the girl was the daughter of a consultant's secretary at the hospital. Jim Devine, Union's senior regional officer, said: "This girl has been placed in a potentially horrendous situation. Quite apart from the fact that it smacks of nepotism, this is a specialised field of care and for the hospital to claim otherwise is an insult to all its staff in the cardiac unit."

Senior staff at the Perth and Kinross NHS Trust initially defended the appointment, arguing that they had confidence in the girl's ability to do the job.

William Gray, the trust's director, said: "The duties involved would be an inappropriate use of skilled nursing or medical staff, and the employment of someone else to do this work means that doctors and nurses are freed to undertake more appropriate clinical duties."

But last night, amid mounting criticism, the trust was forced to climb down and the girl was dismissed.

Dr Gray said: "We must stress that there is no question about the girl's competence, nor have we broken any legal rules or clinical guidelines. It is a matter of public perception. The girl was only allowed in the ward under the supervision of the senior technician and there were no complaints from patients. But we recognise the sensitive nature of this issue and what it could do to patient confidence so we have decided to stop this practice."

He denied the hospital had also been guilty of nepotism. "We could never advertise a position such as this which only involved three hours a week." The girl's age had come to the attention of the trust only last Thursday, he added.

The trust's U-turn failed to placate health unions, which have written to Sam Galbraith, the Scottish health minister, urging him to call an inquiry.

They point out that student nurses and nursing assistants are not allowed to practise under the age of 17 in recognition of the emotional maturity required for such roles.

"This is an extraordinary situation and one which I have never come across before in my 15 years as a union official in the health service," said Mr Devine. "A 15-year-old may not be emotionally mature enough or have the experience to operate effectively in that type of environment." He wanted action to make sure it never happened again.

Although the revelation drew a stern response from the Scottish Office, an inquiry has already been ruled out.

"While we are assured that there was no breach of employment requirements for schoolchildren, we cannot condone the involvement of such young people in patient-related duties," a spokesman said. "We are glad to see that the trust has reaffirmed that such duties will not be undertaken in this way in the future."

MEPs snub Blair on EU leadership

Martin Walker in Brussels

THE European parliament in Brussels yesterday delivered an unprecedented snub to Britain and the Blair government, voting down a resolution which congratulated the UK presidency for its stewardship of the European Union Council of Ministers and its preparations for next month's Cardiff summit.

The defeat was a shock because Labour MEPs are the biggest single group in the 626-seat parliament, and its allies on the left and in the Greens usually mount a comfortable majority.

But resentment over the way the UK presidency mishandled the launch of the euro and the row over the new European central bank, along with widespread suspicion of its "manipulative" spin-doctor tactics, led to the defeat.

Leading the attack Tory Euro-leader Edward McMillan Scott lashed out at Tony Blair's "Robin Reliant" EU leadership, calling it "under-powered and running on three wheels".

The defeat was a particular blow to Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, who was expected to turn to page 2, column 1.



Robin Cook: 'feeble'

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Landmark ruling

Child porn verdict stuns Net lawyers

Judge finds service provider executive guilty on 13 counts

Ian Traynor in Bonn

IN A landmark verdict that stunned lawyers, experts, and multi-media businesses, a Munich court yesterday convicted a former executive of an online service provider for aiding and abetting the spread of child pornography.

The two-year suspended sentence handed down to Felix Somn, the former head of the CompuServe online service in Germany, was believed to be the first time anywhere in the world that a representative of a firm providing access to the Internet had been criminalised because of the content of the material available in cyberspace.

The judge found Somn

guilty on 13 counts of helping to peddle child and animal pornography despite arguments from both the defence and the prosecution for an acquittal, and despite new multi-media legislation in Germany last year which all but absolves Internet access providers of responsibility for criminally offensive material on the Internet.

In the case it mounted against Somn, the Bavarian state prosecutors argued that the Swiss national had knowingly facilitated the spread of child and animal pornography in newsgroups on the world wide web to which CompuServe subscribers have access.

But late in the case, the prosecution called for an acquittal, revising its views and agreeing with the defence

that Somn could not have been expected to control the content of the huge volume of material on the web.

The Bavarian case, which followed from police raids on CompuServe's Munich offices in 1996, was closely watched by German and international experts since it is thought to be the first criminal trial relating to censorship, regulation, and control of cyberspace.

Germany's biggest online service, Deutsche Telekom's T-Online, described the verdict as a "huge surprise", while Bonn officials dealing with privacy and censorship regulations dubbed the conviction "irritating".

But the presiding judge, Wilhelm Hubbert, ruled that Somn had "abused the medium".

After the 1996 raids CompuServe threatened to quit Germany altogether. Somn then stood down as its head in Germany and the company

blocked access to more than 200 newsgroups, later restoring access to all but five.

Internet experts ridiculed the police action as pointless since national regulations are barely able to inhibit what is available on the Internet.

Somn's defence lawyers argued that neither Germany nor Bavaria could set themselves up to police the transnational Internet and that the problem of illegal material on the web could only be tackled internationally.

Prosecuting the defendant or CompuServe was like holding a telephone company accountable for a private subscriber's phone conversations, the defence argued.

The charges brought against Somn predated last year's multi-media legislation which made Germany the first country to regulate cyberspace, curbing what businesses may or may not do on the Internet and outlawing child pornography, Nazi pro-



Felix Somn, who yesterday received a two-year suspended sentence for 'abusing the medium' PHOTOGRAPH: FRANK AUGSTEIN

paganda and denying the Holocaust.

The law, however, states that Internet access providers such as CompuServe are

not liable unless they are "aware of the content" and fail to use "reasonable and technically possible" means to censor it.

Russia puts its all into fight to save firm rouble

James Meek in Moscow

RUSSIA'S leaders closed ranks yesterday to vow that the strong rouble — dividend of seven bitter years of state scrapping, saving and borrowing at the people's expense — would be defended against the threat of a catastrophic devaluation.

But the head of the International Monetary Fund, Michel Camdessus, last night dashed hopes of a call-out of emergency loans to shore up the currency against further panic and retreat.

The rouble, which has escaped the sharp drops in value seen in Asian currencies, firmed slightly yesterday after the central bank's drastic decision on Wednesday to treble interest rates to a thumping 180 per cent.

The mortgage and the overdraft are unknown to Russians, but such a rate will cripple the economy if sustained, and there are expectations of an overseas rescue.

Speaking in Kazakhstan, Mr Camdessus said the IMF representative who arrived in Moscow yesterday, John Odling-Smee, would only discuss paying the next \$670 million of the loan already agreed — a long way short of the crisis package of up to \$10 billion which economists and banks are hoping for.

Mr Camdessus suggested an emergency credit could still be forthcoming, but not soon. "If necessary, after exhaustive analysis, the IMF would be ready to discuss the possibility of extra financing by the fund itself or to recommend other sources of extra finance," he said.

The Russian stock market, which has lost more than a third of its value since May 12, levelled out yesterday after heavy selling on Wednesday, but the government still faced huge interest payments on the money it borrows to pay its bills.

The next few days will be critical to president Boris Yeltsin and prime minister Sergei Kiriyenko as they try to show that they mean business in reducing the govern-

ment's dependence on the money markets by increasing tax collection and cutting spending.

For ordinary Russians, there is little joy in store. If the rouble falls, prices will soar, inflation will follow, and scores of banks will collapse. The sacrifices of the past seven years will be rendered worthless.

If Mr Kiriyenko means what he says, and holds the rouble steady, it is likely to mean mass unemployment replacing unpaid wages as bankruptcies bite, together with spending cuts on a budget, health and education already bites into the bone.

"We still haven't learned to live within our means," the prime minister said after meeting Mr Yeltsin yesterday. "We must ensure that all May's taxes are paid... many firms are an excuse not to bother paying their dues."

The president anticipated with grim relish a meeting today of the emergency tax commission mandated to confront big tax evaders but so far ineffectual. "We must force them to pay, and some of them will be brought before the courts. We have their names already," he said.

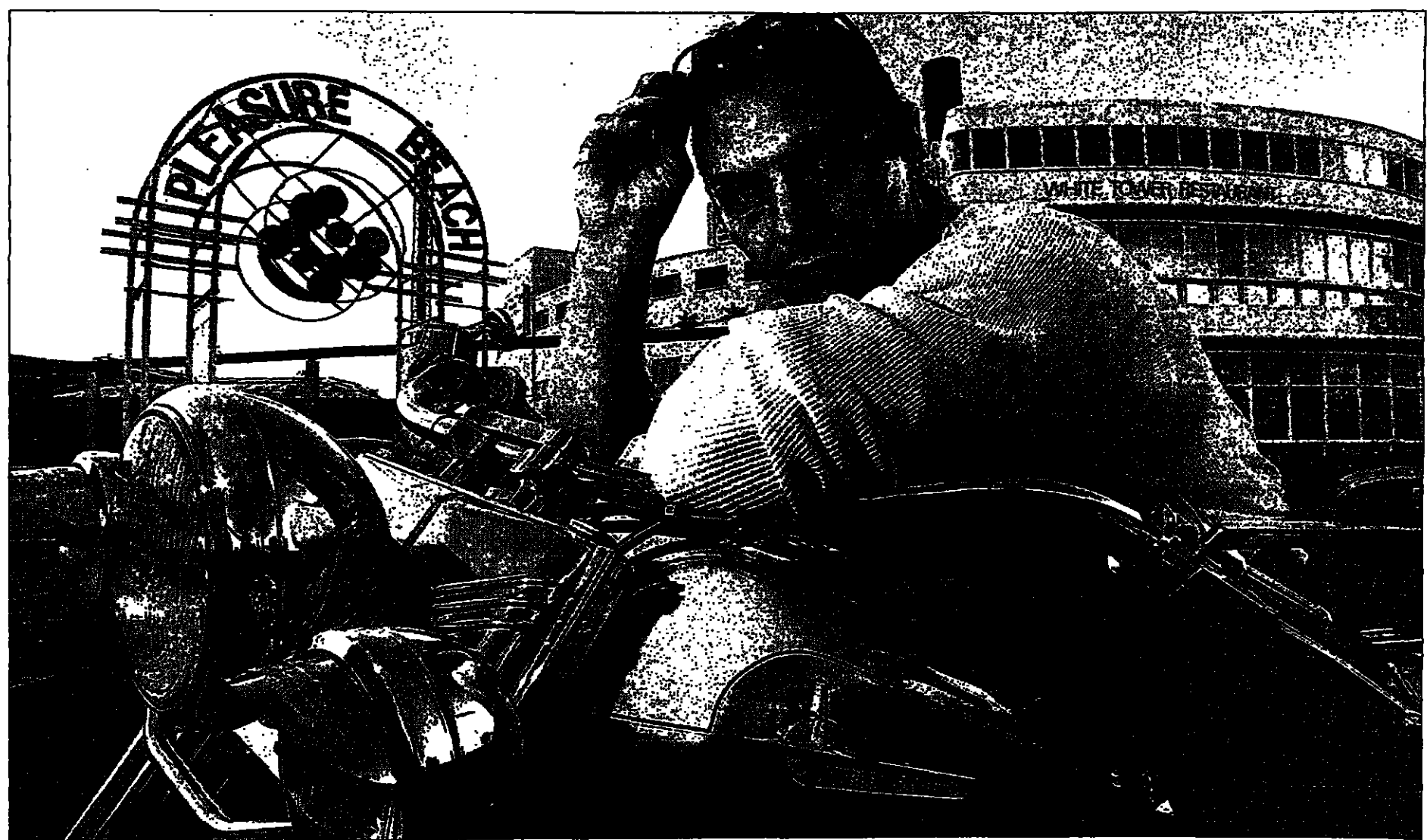
The deputy chairman of the central bank, Sergei Alexashenko, said Russia had the gold and hard currency reserves to defend the rouble. However, the reserves — worth \$14.5 billion — are considerably lower than the \$20 billion of Russian government bonds held by foreigners.

Should the rouble fall, it could bring Mr Kiriyenko down with it, and a shadow would fall over Mr Yeltsin's position.

"The government would sacrifice everything else to support the rouble," political commentator Andrei Piontowski said. "From an economic point of view devaluation has pluses and minuses but, politically, the strong rouble is the establishment's sole achievement in seven years of reform. If the rouble goes, it's a catastrophe for the ruling class."

Rouble trouble, page 10

Vladimir fell and broke his chin. But he finished the act and the women went wild



Martin Wainwright on a man who quit the military for a £1m circus career

SHELDED by dark glasses and with his ponytail tucked into his white crew-neck vest, the world's first £1 million circus star has swapped the glitz of Las Vegas for Blackpool sands.

Jaded by desert life in the United States, the Big Top "aerialist" Vladimir — named as one of the 50 most

beautiful people in the world by America's People magazine — is taking morning jogs between Ripley's Believe-it-or-Not Museum and Robert's oyster bar.

"The woman of Blackpool are lining up," said a spokeswoman for the resort's Pleasure Beach, which has astonished the circus world by paying £1.5 million for a 15-

week season by the balletic former coalminer from Ukraine. Already the top circus earner in Las Vegas, Vladimir's mixture of Nureyev, Valentino and The Full Monty — flying in minimalist leather underwear high above the ring — has prompted an economic extension of girl power.

Draped over a Harley-Davidson under the plastic eyes of Ena Sharples and Elsie Tanner (part of the Coronation Street section of the seafront), the acrobat's tan

and muscles explain the changing market and dramatic investment of the Pleasure Beach. The owner, Amanda Thompson, wanted an act with a buzz for women, without upsetting the men.

Brought up by his mother, a railroad labourer in the mining town of Shakhters, Vladimir worked as a welder, miner and military guard at a nuclear missile base before quitting to join a circus in Kiev.

Study of Chinese acrobatics and anatomical drawings by

Michelangelo led Vladimir — aged 37 and full name Vladimir Kheikal — to pioneer aerialism as a more elegant and dangerous extension of trapeze.

"At Las Vegas last year, I fell and broke my chin and scraped all the skin off my chest," he said. "But I finished the act because once you have gone out on stage, you must carry on until the end." The audience, women as Blackpool's are expected to be when Vladimir opens on July 1, went wild.

Topping the £1 million mark has left trade rivals like Gerry Cottle's Circus — which has 11 acrobats in its summer show — "amazed". But Vladimir, who attributes his skills to his mother ("She hammered nail spikes all day and I used her great, soft biceps as a pillow when I was little"), is happily enjoying the change from Nevada. "I got tired of the heat," he said. "And the nature here reminds me of the Ukraine. You have, for instance, cows."

Blair snubbed on EU leadership after 'spin too far'

continued from page 1

Secretary, who on Tuesday addressed the parliament on Britain's plans for the Cardiff summit. He particularly asked for the parliament's support. But yesterday, the vote was 245-223 against the resolution.

Usually, these parliamentary resolutions are bland and anodyne affairs, which are nodded through on a voice vote. They traditionally come after the summit. This time the Labour MEPs thought it would be clever to get the resolution, with its praise for the UK presidency, passed two weeks before the

summit. They also inserted two fawning references to the UK presidency's performance, in what MEPs felt was "a spin too far".

That infuriated the Liberal group, who saw it as "manipulation", and they joined the British Tories, the Christian Democrats and some of the far left and independent MEPs to hand Britain an embarrassing slap in the face. Some Italian Communists said they voted against the resolution because it praised Robin Cook for his "ethical" code of conduct on EU arms exports, which they saw as toothless.

"The fact is that our continental colleagues have finally seen through the New Labour rhetoric. There has been widespread complaint at the lack of progress made during the UK presidency, and Robin Cook's feeble performance has failed to impress MEPs from every party," said Mr MacMillan-Scott.

A number of factors went into the vote, led by the tactical cunning of the Tories in setting up a procedural ambush. But the row over the euro, Mr Blair's perceived preference for President Clinton and the US over Europe, and the failure of Britain to

develop a coherent EU foreign policy in the Middle East and elsewhere all played a part. The parliament's foreign affairs committee last week accused Mr Cook of cowardice in failing to appear before it.

Labour MEPs tried to downplay the matter yesterday as "a bit of a cock-up", and as an embarrassment for parliament itself. By voting down the resolution, parliament has lost any chance to have a formal input into the Cardiff summit.

The Labour MEP leader, Wayne David, said: "The political forces on the right be-

haved in a foolish and damaging way. They just helped parliament shoot itself in the foot when we have been trying to get the European parliament taken seriously. They have lost any moral authority to comment on the outcome of the summit."

This would all be a storm in a tea cup were it not for the pledges and efforts the Blair government has made to persuade sceptics in Brussels that Britain wants to be "a partner in leadership in Europe". Mr Blair remains popular, but the British hononym in Europe appears to be over.

Speaking for the EPP Christian Democrat group, James Provan (MEP for South Down) said: "Britain's presidency has achieved little in Algeria, Israel, the Middle East or Turkey. Few preparations are in place for enlargement — our single most important issue — and unemployment remains high across Europe."

"The British presidency is also responsible for the worst-managed senior Euro-appointment ever, with the infamous fiasco over the central bank appointment. The whole European project was made to look ridiculous."

Elegiac trip into gathering gloom

Review

Adam Sweeting

Kronos Quartet

Royal Festival Hall

IT'S staggering to consider that the Kronos Quartet have been in action for 25 years, ever since the 22-year-old David Harrington was inspired to form the ensemble by hearing George Crumb's Black Angels. In the intervening quarter century, Kronos have shown audiences that new music can be challenging, stylish and sometimes hilarious.

In the case of Steve Reich's Different Trains, premiered on the South Bank 10 years ago, it can also be tragic and elegiac. Reich conceived the piece from memories of childhood train journeys across the United States between 1939 and 1942. It occurred to him that "as a Jew, if I had been in Europe during this period I would have had to ride very different trains".

The piece is constructed from voice samples and multi-pre-recorded Kronoses, to which the quartet add a fresh layer of live performance. Wheels churn and whistles blow, as the journey moves "from Chicago to New York" into a gathering darkness of slow tempos and shreds of nightmare — "lots of cattle wagons there, they tattooed a number on our arm". Part three, After the War, restores a sense of uneasy calm.

If Different Trains has become a Kronos staple, you're more likely to spot Elvis driving a minicab than to catch a performance of Harry Fatch's US Highball. The unorthodox Parich conceived his own "just intonation" in

place of conventional European scales, and devised special instruments on which to play it. However, Kronos stuck to their usual configuration and brought on David Barron to sing, or recite, Slim's Transcontinental Hobo Trip.

The piece is a vernacular epic of transients hopping freight trains across America, dodging the sadistic railroad enforcers and scavenging for survival. Parich's lyrics full value from resonant American place names: Alabama, Omaha, Cheyenne, Chicago, Nebraska. The quartet arrangement supports and embellishes the narrative, synchronising with the spoken-word rhythms and ebbs and flows as the journey unfolds. The music seems to teeter on the brink of tonality, neither dissonant nor conventionally harmonic. The performance was astonishingly effective.

Kronos had kicked off the evening with three shorter pieces, to knead the audience into a receptive frame of mind. P. Q. Phan's Raising Shadow deployed not only short, jagged phrases but also shrieks, yells, foot-stamping and Harrington blowing down a conch shell. John Lurie's Bella By Barlight tiptoed stealthily across the stage and vanished as suddenly as it had arrived. For Arum Manis, by Jack Bodie, Kronos were fortified with howls, echoes and tape repeats, intensifying the vortex-like, non-linear feel of the piece.

Smiling enigmatically, Kronos lined up to take their bows. If things had worked out differently, they might have ended up as Sonic Youth, or making sinister low-budget noir movies. Luckily for us they didn't.

This review appeared in later editions yesterday.

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Tests reveal high price of lack of progress on disarmament since cold war □ Growing fears that more nations will seek nuclear status

Shockwaves echo around the world

lan Black
Diplomatic Editor

IN DETONATING five nuclear devices, Pakistan did more than just match the card that India played two weeks ago. It crossed the threshold of doubt to become south Asia's second fully-fledged nuclear power and sent ripples of concern across the world about how to stop others joining the club.

It also highlighted the urgent need for the world's five "official" nuclear powers to move swiftly to reduce their huge arsenals — and brought an angry chorus of complaints that they had failed to live up to their own responsibilities. "We have to see this as a wake-up call that the pace of post-cold war nuclear disarmament has not been as effective as it should have been," said Rebecca Johnson, director of the Acronym Institute for arms control.

"If we are going to pull India and Pakistan back from the brink of a regional arms race then it has to be in the wider context of moves towards disarmament and legitimising nuclear weapons."

In practical terms, the world now has to deal with the fact that Israel, India and Pakistan, once dubbed threshold powers — on the brink of being able to produce nuclear weapons — are now clearly nuclear-capable but dangerously unfettered by any international controls.

None of the three signed the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT), though Israel, almost certainly the world's sixth-ranking nuclear power, signed the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT).

Under the NPT, signed in 1968 and renewed in 1995, nations without nuclear arms renounced them for good, while the five declared weapons states — the United States, Russia, China, France and Britain — promised to disarm and develop peaceful nuclear co-operation under international safeguards.

It is here that many see the tragically lost opportunity of the post-cold war years, when a proud and assertive India, with a population of 900 million and concerns about neighbouring nuclear-armed China as well as Pakistan, found what it called "nuclear apartheid" of haves and have-nots insupportable.

"The high status and political value accorded nuclear arms has been a powerful incentive to India and Pakistan to go nuclear," said Dan Plesch of the British American Security Information Council. "Prestige rather than any external threat was the fundamental motivation in New Delhi."

Two enemies locked in long embrace

FOR the first time, the endless see-saw of hostility between India and Pakistan, which has already led to three wars, is stacked on both sides with a declared nuclear capability.

There was jubilation in the streets of Islamabad at Pakistan's atomic tests. Since India's tests on May 11 and 13, intense popular pressure has been on the Pakistani prime minister, Nawaz Sharif, to respond — despite the punitive international measures this could bring down on a nation highly dependent on foreign aid and loans.

Pakistan has already been stripped of all military and humanitarian aid since 1990 from the United States — a major donor and cold war ally. Washington withdrew this aid because it believed Islamabad had a nuclear bomb.

Mr Sharif said yesterday that if needs be, government buildings and offices would be sold off for money to help the country through any hard times.

Pakistan already spends about 25 per cent of its \$2 billion budget on defence — a reflection of its security concerns, and the potential for large commissions for the elite. India and Pakistan are among the world's leading purchasers of military equipment.

Pakistan's former prime minister, Benazir Bhutto, called for caution yesterday, saying that despite the euphoria in her homeland, "I don't think people realise the price Pakistan will have to pay."

The government should say: "We were forced to go nuclear but we don't believe in escalation," she said. In cold war times, Pakistan was cultivated as an anti-communist ally by the United States. China, too, became a Pakistani patron. India took a more neutral stance under Jawaharlal Nehru's premiership, and accepted Soviet aid.

India and Pakistan fought their first war over disputed Kashmir in 1948. After India's humiliating defeat by China over disputed frontiers in the

John Gittings on what lies behind the tragedy of 50 years of mutual hostility

Himalayas in 1962, Pakistan seized the chance to promote insurgency in Kashmir, leading to the second Indo-Pakistan war in 1965. The third war in 1971 ended with East Pakistan becoming independent Bangladesh.

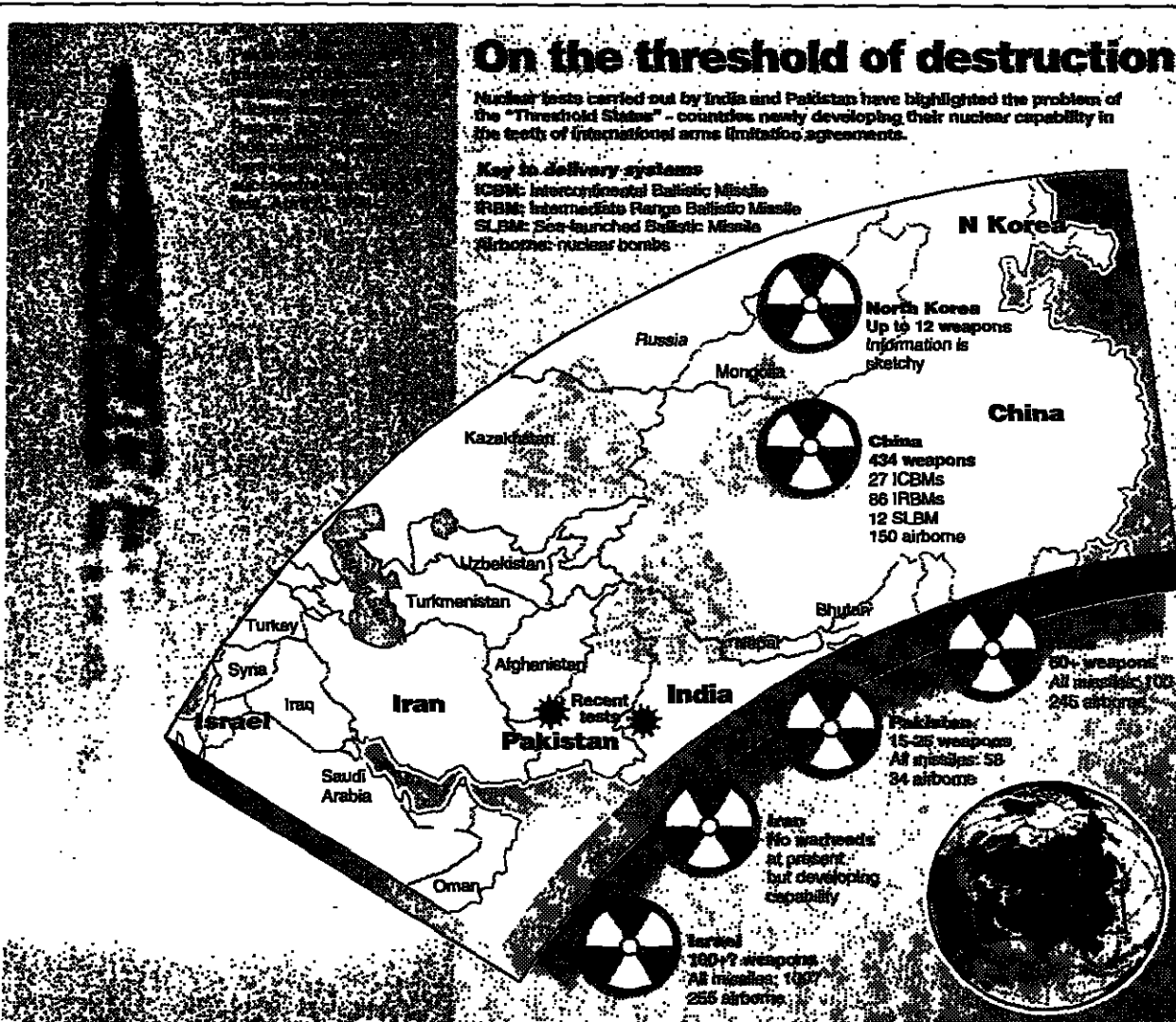
But in 1988, Mr Bhutto and the late Indian leader, Rajiv Gandhi, agreed to ban attacks on each other's nuclear installations, and to exchange military information. Then political upheavals in both countries stalled progress. India cracked down on the independence movement in Kashmir — its only Muslim majority state — while Pakistan resumed support for insurgents there.

Only a year ago, things seemed to be improving again, as Delhi and Islamabad resumed a dialogue suspended for three years. Now that dialogue is in ruins.

The volatile nature of this relationship is rooted in history. If only India and Pakistan were just enemies, it is often argued, their differences might be resolved. The tragedy is that they are almost friends, entwined in an ambiguous embrace that has united and divided them.

Pakistan was hacked out of India as the British made a hasty departure in 1947: the result was large-scale migration with accompanying massacres. Yet serious efforts had been made, up to the division, to reach agreement between Muslims and Hindus.

Today serious opinion on both sides argues that real economic progress in South Asia is impossible without rapprochement. But politicians and generals have fomented public hostility. With both sides now declared nuclear powers, the stakes are dangerously raised.



'If the nation will only take one meal a day, my children will take only one meal a day' 'They have vindicated our policy... India is ready to meet any challenge'



Nawaz Sharif, Pakistan's prime minister



Atal Behari Vajpayee (right), India premier

Scientists cast doubt on claim of five tests

A MAGNITUDE 5 seismic shock in the Baluchistan desert yesterday confirmed what experts had suspected for years: that Pakistan is a full member of the nuclear weapons club.

That means Pakistan has the know-how for a warhead, which could be fitted to its most powerful missile, the Hatf-5 Ghauri, tested last month, shortly after India revealed that it had detonated a thermonuclear device.

But it was not clear last night exactly what Pakistan had done. The foreign minister, Goyar Ayub Khan, told Reuters news agency that two tests had been conducted. Pakistan's prime minister Nawaz Sharif later announced five successful tests. Local villagers reported "two or three" tremors.

The Australian Geological Survey reported that it had registered only one explosion of magnitude 5 on the Richter scale. Scientists immediately began to suspect a Hiroshima-type device, with a yield of up to 10 kilotons.

The British Geological Survey reported a shock of 4.7. Later the US Geological Survey pinpointed a 4.8 magnitude quake at 10.16 GMT at 28.96 North, 64.73 East, in the Chaghi Hills near the Afghan border. It was also picked up automatically by the prototype Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty monitoring equipment.

"Our problem is that we don't know very much about the geology of that area," said Dr Roger Clark, a Leeds University seismologist who is a member of Veritas, the London-based test ban monitoring group. "It works out as somewhere between two and 20 kilotons, a modest Hiroshima-sized bomb. It does appear to be only one event and not five, so just like the Indian tests we conclude that the other ones were either small or they were all simultaneous and/or small," he said.

Pakistan is known to have begun working on nuclear weapons in secret in 1972, after defeat in the 1971 war with India. In 1980, the US

Tim Radford and Richard Norton-Taylor on the bomb

government cut off aid and imposed sanctions.

The belief is that the country has enough enriched uranium for 15 to 20 weapons, each comparable to the Hiroshima device. Until last month, however, Pakistan had missiles only capable of reaching 300 kilometres.

India, which conducted its first nuclear test in 1974, has two aircraft capable of delivering nuclear weapons — and two missiles.

A Pakistani mobile land-based ballistic missile which could deliver nuclear warheads was test-fired for the first time last month with North Korean help.

The Ghauri missile, which has a range of 1,350 kilometres — sufficient to target Delhi, Bombay, and other major Indian cities — is based on North Korea's Nodong missile, not Chinese technology as has been widely assumed.

The disclosure, first made by Paul Beaver of Jane's defence publications, was confirmed yesterday by intelligence sources. North Korean aircraft flying to Pakistan earlier this year are understood to have carried technicians to prepare the tests.

"The Pakistani missile tests caught India by surprise. Development of India's new missile system — the Agni — cannot yet be equipped with warheads.

India's existing Prithvi missiles have a range of up to 250 kilometres, enough to reach all Pakistan's cities, though a nuclear attack by India would risk radioactive fall-out endangering neighbouring Indian states.

India's Agni missile — still believed to be under test — is designed to have a range of 2,500 kilometres. "Pakistan can trump India technologically," George Perkovich, of the Jones Foundation, a US

Chill in the streets, heat in parliament

INDIANS clogged the phone lines to newspaper offices with nervous calls yesterday as the first rumours of the Pakistani bomb swept through the capital. "People were apprehensive. They wanted to know what happens now," said one senior reporter.

It was a sobering shift of mood since the euphoria just over a fortnight ago when India held its own nuclear tests and people cheered in the streets.

"Hopefully, now that both countries know each other's strength, they will have the

M. R. Narayan finds Delhi's people in a sober mood

sense to stop their war-mongering and give people better lives," said Ashok Sharma, aged 32, an office assistant.

In the Muslim-majority state of Kashmir, militants exploded firecrackers to celebrate the Pakistani bomb. "People are jubilant here, but the news makes me shiver that soon there will be war,"

said Mansoor Anjum, a local newspaper editor.

In Delhi, Abhik Banerjee, a 26-year-old student, said he felt the Pakistani tests were justified in the light of India's tests. "I firmly believe that neither country will be mad enough to press the button," he added.

Opinion polls after the Indian tests — deemed by many a demonstration of national self-respect — showed 90 per cent support. But yesterday's more nervous mood was mirrored in parliament where the opposition flayed the

Hindu nationalist government with charges that its policies had provoked Pakistan's tests and created new instability in South Asia.

The prime minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, called for calm but the leader of the Communist Party of India-Marxist, Somnath Chatterjee, shouted: "You have started a nuclear arms race in this region," as pandemonium broke out in the Lok Sabha, the lower house, at news of the Pakistani blasts.

Opposition members jumped to their feet, waving order

papers and screaming abuse at the government side.

The Pakistani tests came on the second day of parliament's first formal debate on the government's nuclear programme and the virulence of the opposition attacks appeared to stun the prime minister.

The former prime minister, I. K. Gujral, an advocate of better relations with Pakistan, appealed to both sides for sanity, and to "talk and act responsibly" now that their nuclear capabilities were out in the open.

Worldwide condemnation and sanctions

AUSTRALIA: First to take action, withdrawing an offer of A\$2.6 million (£1 million) aid to Pakistan and considering further punitive measures.

BRITAIN: Foreign Secretary Robin Cook said the 15 EU nations would urgently consider sanctions against Pakistan.

CHINA: Voiced deep concern, urging India and Pakistan to renounce nuclear weapons to stop tensions escalating.

FRANCE: Deplored and

condemned the tests "which fly in the face of worldwide efforts against nuclear proliferation and for an end to testing".

GERMANY: Foreign minister Klaus Kinkel urged dialogue and not a nuclear arms race.

JAPAN: Pakistan's biggest bilateral donor said it was considering stiff sanctions. "In parallel with what we did to India".

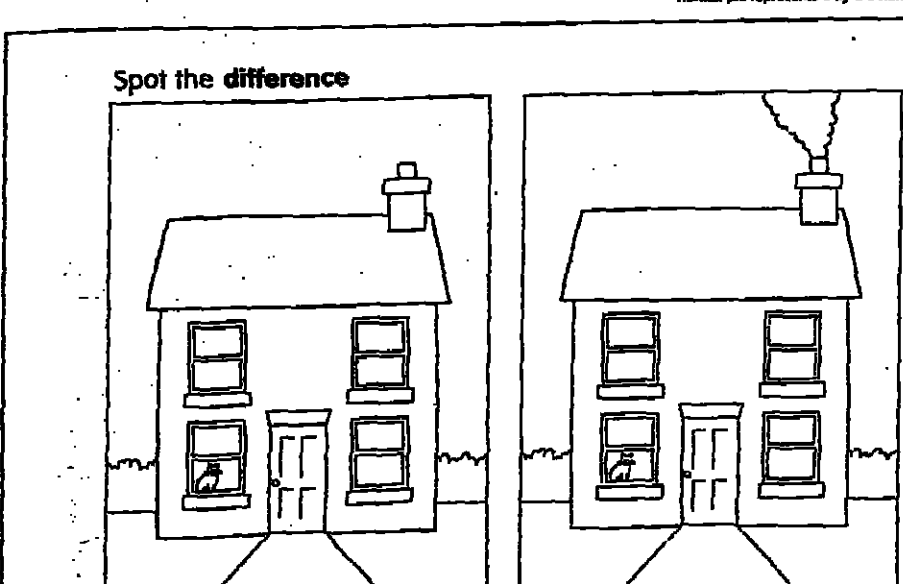
RUSSIA: Foreign ministry said it was not considering sanctions, but added: "It is

deplorable that the Pakistani leadership has been unable to cope with its emotions and to demonstrate circumspection and common sense at an extremely important moment."

UNITED NATIONS: Secretary-General Kofi Annan appealed to India and Pakistan to refrain from mutual accusations which could further inflame tensions.

UNITED STATES: President Bill Clinton condemned Pakistan's decision as a lost opportunity, and imposed sanctions.

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Government releases figures to highlight top-up benefits for bottom earners as anxiety is voiced over different minimum wage levels

Labour fights union fury over low pay

Larry Elliot
Ewen MacAskill
and Mark Atkinson

THE Government last night sought to douse union anger over the proposed level of the minimum wage when it released figures showing that families with children would be earning at least £6 an hour once top-up benefits were added to the basic pay of low earners.

Downing Street and the Treasury opted for an offensive rather than defensive strategy in the face of union protests that a minimum wage of £3.60 an hour was too low.

Tony Blair's chief press officer stressed that the Government was fulfilling its promise to establish the principle of a minimum wage. "It is something that we are happy to trumpet."

Leading unions expressed disappointment with the level of the minimum wage and promised to campaign for improvements. But a union source conceded privately that there were few hopes of getting Mr Blair to change his mind either over the £3.60 figure or securing an increase for 16 to 21-year-olds, whose minimum is to be set at £3.20.

Whitehall sources, stressing that the minimum wage had to be seen as part of an overall package, said that changes announced in the Budget would make a big difference to the final take-home pay of the least well-off, which would be £180 per week for any household with children.

The impact of the new Working Families Tax Credit, the reduction in national insurance contributions, and the increase in child benefit formed a central part of the Government's evidence to the Low Pay Commission, which was set up by Mr Blair last year to investigate a minimum wage.

The Government, which only received the 400-page report from the Low Pay Commission on Wednesday, will give its verdict in a Commons statement in the next few weeks, but it is unlikely to depart significantly from the Low Pay Commission recommendations.

The Chancellor, Gordon Brown, has always argued that the minimum wage was only one plank in the Government's anti-poverty strategy,

and had to be seen in conjunction with changes to the benefit system.

According to the Government's figures, a lone parent with one child working a full 35-hour week and living in rented accommodation would be earning the equivalent of £6 an hour once tax, national insurance, the working families tax credit, housing benefit and child benefit were taken into account.

A lone parent with one child working 16 hours a week would be on £11.70 an hour.

For one-earner couples, those with two children in rented homes would be on £7.10, those with three children £7.70 an hour, and those with four children £8.30 an hour. A one-earner owner-occupier couple with two children would be on the equivalent of £6.10 an hour.

The top-ups will only help those families with children, but Government sources said that this group included large numbers of low-paid workers under 21, many of whom were single parents.

Although the unions are unhappy about the lower rate for young workers, ministers were concerned that too high a rate might lead to job losses and cut against the grain of its New Deal programme.

John Edmonds, general secretary of the GMB union, said a "two-tier" pay system would cause social alienation and turn under-21s into "second-class citizens".

Bill Morris, leader of the Transport and General Workers' Union, described it as a "missed opportunity" and warned that his campaign for a higher wage would continue because Britain could not settle for "second best".

Job losses from the minimum wage are expected to be concentrated in poorly paid service industries, like hotels, catering and retailing, but the impact is not expected to be large. There may even be a small positive net impact on employment if higher costs spur firms to increase productivity, argue some economists.

According to the Office for National Statistics, there are between 2.058 million and 2.367 million people over the age of 21 in jobs paying less than £3.60.

The number captured by the proposed lower £3.20 rate for the 16-21 age group is estimated at between 275,000 and 385,000.



Knitwear boss Trevor Hall, who fears the high pound and minimum wage will force him to cut 100 jobs and move production abroad. PHOTOGRAPH BY DOUG MARKE

The employer/ Boss of family knitwear firm sees its future in low-wage foreign lands

AFTER calculating the cost to his business of the Government's £3.60 an hour minimum wage, Trevor Hall made an agonising decision yesterday.

"I have already looked at producing overseas and this makes me convinced I'll have to do it," he said. "That probably means closing down in Britain."

His Leicester company, Commando Knitwear, family owned and managed, has established a niche market with its regulation navy blue sweaters for the country's police forces. It has also cornered the trade in those khaki woollens be-

loved of country folk. But after shedding 10 per cent of his staff in the past three months, there seems little future for the remaining 100, who produce 5,000 sweaters weekly. Some of them earn £3.40 an hour.

Struggling to maintain competitiveness against a high pound, Mr Hall said he had been looking overseas for manufacturing bases. Top of the list are Thailand and Romania, although he concedes eastern Europe "is rather unstable". It will need a pilot run, he says, "but if it is OK why should I manufacture here? I just cannot absorb the costs."

Peter Hetherington

The worker/ 'You can't win. People pay you what they like. They've got the upper hand'

EMERGING from the job centre yesterday afternoon, Jackie and her boyfriend, David, found it hard to accept the reality on the situations vacant boards.

"I was getting £3.33 an hour six years ago in a shop and they are still advertising for the same rates," said Jackie. "Wages seem to be going down, rather than up."

Until recently she was working as a care assistant in an old folk's home for £3.05 an hour. "The residents were great, although the pay wasn't very good. But I couldn't stand the people I was working with and became ill."

Peter Hetherington

JOB CENTRE Care assistants: £3 per hour plus £10 "for sleep-ins".
JOB CENTRE Sewing machinist: "fully experienced". £2.97 an hour plus bonus scheme.
JOB CENTRE Draftsman: structural designer in Netherlands. £25 per hour
JOB CENTRE Part-time bookkeeping clerk for local taxi firm: shifts to be arranged. "Must be flexible". £3.20 an hour.
JOB CENTRE Security: 54-hour week, night shifts and weekends. (Applicants need a ten year checkable work history - own transport advantage). £2.47 an hour.
JOB CENTRE Shop assistants: will serve customers, fill shelves, cash handling, experience required. £3.61 an hour.

Advertised at South Shields Job Centre yesterday

back and people just exploit you. Between us we manage to pay the bills, but we've got nothing left."

Invariably, the job centre had little to offer. "It's total crap. You have to go to other agencies to get the jobs, but they always take a cut so the wage is never so good. You just can't win. Employers just pay you what they like. They've got the upper hand."

Some at the South Shields job centre say they have been forced to work overseas to make ends meet. While the work is lucrative, it rarely lasts for long. John, 45, says he can make £880 a week gross working in a shipyard in Hamburg. But he had to return for his family. "Wages here are very low. I recently saw a security job advertised for £1.50 an hour."

Peter Hetherington

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Which one will it be? Or will it be neither? Nicole, played by Estelle Skornik, gets a kiss from Vic Reeves, left, and Bob Mortimer. PHOTOGRAPH: NEIL MUNN

Papa - I'm to marry. Which one, Nicole?



Spurned by Nicole: Hugh Grant, left, and Chris Evans

Beauty and wit were matched at the Savoy yesterday when Renault launched its new Clio commercial. The story of Nicole and Papa moved on with all the spirit of the little car it promotes, when its heroine met two unlikely potential husbands - TV comedians Vic Reeves and Bob Mortimer.

Tonight, in an advertising break during Coronation Street, the one who steals Nicole's heart will be revealed - or perhaps not; Renault has filmed three endings, and refuses to say which will be used.

The wedding is the eighth ad in a series that has followed Nicole from a shy

teenager in Provence to a sophisticated Parisienne. The campaign is one of the most successful ever - in a survey in 1996, Nicole was more widely recognised than the then prime minister, John Major.

Yesterday Max Donchin, who plays Papa, escorted Estelle Skornik on to a podium in a £5,000 silk and lace dress for a "pre-wedding breakfast" while Vic and Bob, in morning dress, stood open-mouthed. "You're beautiful," said Bob.

Apparently both actor Hugh Grant and DJ Chris Evans had agreed to wed the 27-year-old Nicole, only to be jilted when "public interest grew so strong that we decided we needed three different endings and so we chose a famous double act", according to Graeme Holt, a spokesman for Renault UK.

After being introduced to the media, the wedding party posed beside the new Clio. A group of men (looking suspiciously like actors) held signs saying "Don't do it Nicole" and shouted "Stay with Papa".

Following tradition, Nicole's wedding has something old, something new, something borrowed, and something blue. A 1931 Renault carries the bride to the church; the latest Clio is driven by a mystery bridegroom; the groom's top hat is borrowed; and Nicole wears a blue garter.

Renault is expecting more than 23 million people to see the ad tonight, more than 50 per cent of the viewing public.

Cash call for shamed police force

Martin Wainwright

A FIERCELY critical report on a police force accused of bizarre initiation rites and sexual harassment was published by the Government yesterday, condemning "management malaise" and "sham" equal opportunities policies, and calling for "significant investment" to effect meaningful change.

The chief inspector of constabulary, John Stevens, called for a root and branch review of the organisation of North Yorkshire police, which has faced a series of expensive sexual harassment cases in the past five years.

The report, which found a near absence of good communication in the force, said "unprecedented numbers of officers asked for interviews with Mr Stevens' team."

He was called in to oversee an audit of the force after the retirement of the former chief constable, David Burke, who retired with allegations of "neglect of duty" against him unresolved.

The findings were welcomed by the new chief constable, David Kenworthy, who said he had drawn similar conclusions during his first four months in command. The police authority chair, Liberal Democrat councillor Angela Harris, described the report as "detailed, wide-ranging and a help with working towards a better police service."

The inspectorate was called in after allegations of initiation rites and sexual harassment at Harrogate police station in 1992, and the payment of an estimated £500,000 in an out-of-court settlement to a former detective there, Libby Ashurst. A second

woman officer was later paid compensation in a similar case, and the force was accused of excessive secrecy and failing to take equal opportunities seriously.

Mr Stevens acknowledged that Mr Burke began an overhaul of personnel management but said greater resources are needed to make it more effective. The report said: "Without significant investment, it is unclear whether the force could support a meaningful change to its organisational culture."

"Nowhere is this more required than in the area of equal opportunities, yet Her Majesty's Inspector was disappointed to find little evidence of commitment, let alone investment."

The report also warned that few officers have any confidence in training and grievance procedures, and specified that "there is a clear and unequivocal under-representation of female officers in ranks above constable and in specialist posts".

It added that rumour is the most widely used form of communication in the force, and that good practice has resulted more from individual initiative than management.

Mr Kenworthy said the report would be useful to help bring about change, adding: "It's going to take some time to achieve, but whatever happened in the past, the force can now move forward."

Mrs Harris said: "I am confident we will now work towards creating the infrastructure for a better and more effective police service."

Phil Willis, Liberal Democrat MP for Harrogate and a prominent critic of the force's management failings, described the report as a "damning indictment" of the old regime.

Chronology

- August 1993 - North Yorkshire police presents a draft policy document to the police authority, outlining steps to stamp out sexual harassment.
- June 27, 1996 - Internal police federation report states that sexual and racial harassment and bullying are rife within the North Yorkshire force.
- September 1996 - Det. Con Libby Ashurst, 27, upset at treatment by several officers at Harrogate, leaves the force. She receives £130,000 and a pension of £18,000. PC Amanda Rose, who worked in same office, reportedly received £10,000.
- September 25, 1996 - PC David Anderton is asked to resign after being found guilty of four disciplinary

- charges, one of which was sexual harassment.
- January 8, 1998 - Disciplinary proceedings launched against NYP Chief Constable David Burke over his alleged "neglect of duty" while overseeing complaints of sexual harassment.
- January 19, 1998 - Action against North Yorkshire Police collapses as PC Ingrid Lowe, 25, declines to give evidence at an industrial tribunal to back up her claims of sexual harassment at Scarborough police station.
- January 22, 1998 - Former chief constable sacks him before he could explain his role in tackling sexual harassment, and threatens legal action.

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Political prisoners Nuku Sulaeman and Andi Syahputra (left and second left) were freed in Jakarta yesterday. East Timor leader Xanana Gusmao (far right) was visited by Derek Fatchett, seen with President Habibie

MAIN PHOTOGRAPH: ACHMAD IBRAHIM

Habibie urged to free Timor leader

Nick Cumming-Bruce and John Aglionby in Jakarta

THE Indonesian president, Jusuf Habibie, faced growing international calls for action over East Timor yesterday, on top of renewed domestic agitation for reform and international Monetary Fund pressure for stability.

The British foreign minister, Derek Fatchett, met the

jailed East Timorese leader, Xanana Gusmao, in Jakarta and later urged Mr Habibie to free the country's most famous detainee as a step towards resolving tensions over the former Portuguese colony Indonesia invaded 23 years ago.

Barely a week after taking over, Mr Habibie sought to deflect demands for accelerating change by agreeing to a new session of parliament to revise election laws. A general election would follow early next year. The presi-

dent's advisers said this would lead to a further session of the assembly to elect a president and vice-president.

It was a gesture intended to distance Mr Habibie's government from the discredited Suharto regime, and came after he paid the first visit by a president to parliament in more than three decades. The government yesterday also announced the release of two more political detainees.

Like the timetable for elections, these moves were in-

tended to cool agitation.

Mr Habibie was also aiming to persuade the visiting IMF director, Hubert Neils, to release the next tranche of cash under its \$41 billion (\$28 billion) bail-out which was suspended as Mr Suharto's government collapsed.

But the president ran the gauntlet of several hundred protesting students at the gate of parliament demanding his resignation.

Amien Rais, the opposition leader, condemned the elec-

tion plan. The existing parliament was a "creation of the ancient regime" handpicked by Mr Suharto, he said, and it would be "more reasonable, more productive if we wait for a couple of months and have a real, genuine general election".

Mr Habibie received more encouraging reaction from Mr Fatchett, who urged the government to maintain political and economic reform.

Mr Fatchett, representing the European Union, wel-

comed the release of political prisoners, and joined calls made earlier by the United States, Australia and Portugal for the early release of Mr Gusmao. It would facilitate a "just, global and internationally acceptable solution to the problem", he said.

The government has promised to review the cases of all political detainees, but Mr Habibie's advisers say there is resistance from the armed forces to setting Mr Gusmao free. Officials accompanying

Mr Fatchett to the prison yesterday tried to discourage press questions to Mr Gusmao.

Mr Fatchett's visit focused on the British embassy, which is still being criticised for its failure to warn Britons of the situation in Jakarta as it slid into rioting and mob violence earlier this month.

Britons returning to Indonesia this week after evacuating to Singapore and Kuala Lumpur have told of their anger that the embassy did

not keep them informed during the two weeks that culminated in Mr Suharto's resignation last week. More than a dozen say they intend to write to the embassy to voice their grievance.

"I do not expect to be mothered day and night", said one woman returning with two children yesterday, "but the silence from the embassy was astonishing, particularly when other embassies were starting to evacuate their nationals."

Threats and killings disrupt run-up to Colombian election

Jeremy Lennard in Bogotá

COLOMBIA'S security forces will be trying to ensure that presidential candidates survive until Sunday when football-crazy voters take a brief break from World Cup preparations to go to the polls.

Campaigning closed last weekend amid death threats and bomb attacks on party offices. Andres Pastrana, the opposition conservative who has a commanding 17-point lead in opinion polls, has received at least 25 death threats during his two-month campaign. Horacio Serpa — the ruling Liberal party candidate — has had 18 in the last 10 days.

The incumbent president, Ernesto Samper, is leaving his successor with a number of headaches. His government has presided over a sharp escalation in the 34-year-old civil war, and an economic downturn after 50 years of stability. It has also been the subject of a far-reaching drug corruption scandal which has left ministers in jail and the public clamouring for change.

As Mr Samper's former interior minister, Mr Serpa has struggled to overcome his image as a representative of the old order. In contrast, Mr Pastrana has boosted his popularity with the support of Liberal anti-corruption rebels, including Alfonso Valdivieso — the former prosecutor-general who led investiga-

tions into the \$4 million funding of Mr Samper's campaign by the Cali cocaine cartel.

But Mr Pastrana also hails from an establishment background. He is the son of former president Misael Pastrana, whose policies in the early 1970s did little for those outside the ruling elite. Some doubt whether either candidate will be willing to dismantle the clientelist system which elects them.

As ever in Colombian elections, the campaign has been dominated by violence from guerrillas and paramilitaries. In the run-up to last October's local elections, guerrillas murdered 20 officials and kidnapped hundreds. Some 2,000 candidates withdrew and voting was reduced to a sham.

This time the paramilitaries are pushing for the political recognition enjoyed by their leftwing enemies. A series of civilian massacres in guerrilla-dominated regions of the country was followed 10 days ago by a rare incursion into urban areas. Heavily armed men in combat gear stormed poor neighbourhoods in the city of Barranquilla, leaving 10 dead and at least 30 missing.

As well as being associated with Mr Serpa's political career, Barranquilla is the centre of Colombia's oil industry. A series of strikes and chaos which followed the killings isolated the city from the rest of the country for nearly a week, and caused petrol shortages in Bogotá.

Franco's brutal justice survives into the Nineties

John Hooper in Madrid

HUMAN rights observers have this week been given a rare glimpse into the workings of one of the world's least known — and least savoury — regimes.

In Malabo, the capital of the former Spanish colony of Equatorial Guinea, 117 people went on trial on Monday accused of separatist violence. The defendants, many of whom face the death penalty, are being judged at a summary hearing under a code of military law that has remained substantially unchanged since it was first imposed by the late Spanish dictator Francisco Franco in 1948.

Possibly because four of the defendants are Spanish citizens, the government has allowed foreign journalists to cover the proceedings and has agreed to the presence of observers from Amnesty International.

The defendants showed signs of apparent torture, but their complaints of mistreat-

ment were dismissed by the judge, reports reaching Madrid said. Several were missing parts of their ears and told journalists in court they had been mutilated with razors.

Asked by the prosecutor to speak more loudly, one defendant replied: "I can't. My jaw was broken during the interrogations."

Others had burn marks or wore plasters over their nails. But the Spanish newspaper El País quoted Equatorial Guinea's information minister, Lucas Nguema, as saying: "I hadn't noticed [the apparent evidence of torture] — they may be tattoos or some custom".

The proceedings appear not to respect even the unde-

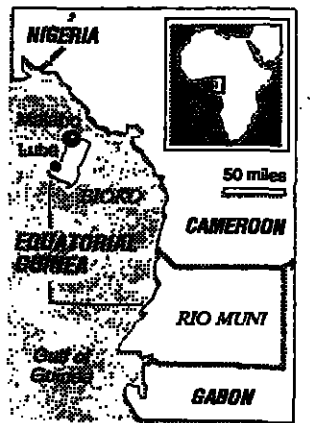
manding standards of Francoist military jurisprudence. The 1948 code laid down that summary justice could only be meted out to those caught in the act. Defence lawyers said this was the case for no more than one in five of the accused.

Several defendants were missing parts of their ears and told journalists in court they had been mutilated with razors

Some defendants are charged with sedition — an offence which their lawyers claim does not feature in the code. On January 21, guerrillas of the Movement for the Self-determination of the Island of Bioko (MAIB) attacked three police stations in Luba, killing four soldiers and a civilian. Bioko is the seat of the administration and has been increasingly populated since independence by members of the mainland Fang tribe. The MAIB was formed in 1993 by

members of the Bubi tribe, which originally inhabited Bioko.

Equatorial Guinea has been ruled since 1979 by President Teodoro Obiang, who came to power following the overthrow and execution of his uncle. He was re-elected two years ago with more than 90 per cent of the vote in a



poll marred by claims of blatant fraud.

Fraud claim over Lesotho ballot

David Beresford in Johannesburg

EVIDENCE that last Saturday's general election in Lesotho was rigged is likely to bring more political turmoil to the former British protectorate.

The Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD) won a landslide victory with 78 of the 79 national assembly seats contested. The poll was endorsed enthusiastically by observers from the Southern African Development Community, who described it as "free, fair and transparent", and more

cautiously by Commonwealth observers. But opposition parties are planning protests.

It is suspected the main mechanism used to fix the result was the electoral roll. A South African firm of forensic consultants hired by the Basotho National Party carried out a statistical analysis of the roll which threw up some curious anomalies, such as the fact that eight times more voters were born on the first day of January than on any other day of the year.

There was also a curious tendency for them to be born on the second day of the second month, the third day

of the third month, the fourth day of the fourth month and so on.

The consultants also established that the independent electoral commission, which initially tried to prevent opposition parties from seeing the electoral lists, allowed 10 per cent of the electorate to register without providing their date of birth. Voters with similar, or identical names were found on the lists.

There have also been reports from polling stations that the "indelible" ink used to mark the hands of voters when they had cast their bal-

lot — usually an effective last defence against multiple voting — could be wiped off with saliva.

The LCP was set up last year by the then prime minister and leader of the Basotho Congress Party (BCP), Ntsu Mokhehle, in the face of a leadership challenge.

Dissatisfaction with the election result could bring cross-border action by the Congress of South African Trade Unions which represents 100,000 Basotho in South African mines. It is reported to have secretly decided in 1996 to work towards Lesotho's incorporation in South Africa.

Hizbullah attacks yards from Israel

Julian Borger in Jerusalem

HIZBULLAH guerrillas have ambushed and killed two Israeli soldiers in Lebanon, just yards from the border with Israel in an area previously thought to be under Israeli army control, Israeli and Lebanese officials said yesterday.

A bomb was detonated at the roadside as an armoured personnel carrier passed. The attack took place near the village of Marjaba, in the Israeli-controlled security zone, at about midnight on Wednesday.

"The bomb was set off by someone relatively close to the force who could accurately see their movement," Brigadier-General Eli Eitam told journalists.

A Hizbullah statement issued yesterday said its fighters had been lying in wait and had opened fire on the patrol after the explosion. Two Israeli soldiers were also wounded. The ambush followed four days of Israeli air attacks on suspected guerrilla strongholds in Lebanon. There were

no reported casualties from the air raids.

The army said yesterday that it was investigating whether the Hizbullah guerrillas involved in the attack had been sheltered by villagers.

Public pressure is mounting in Israel for a withdrawal from the buffer zone, which the Israeli army has occupied since 1982. The government has offered to withdraw on condition it is offered security guarantees from the Lebanese government. But Syria, which dominates Lebanese politics, has so far refused to contemplate a peace agreement without an Israeli withdrawal from the disputed Golan Heights.

Meanwhile, the Israeli opposition leader, Ehud Barak, warned that the prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, would lead the country towards possible war unless he immediately accepted the United States proposal for a West Bank troop withdrawal. "As a former chief-of-staff, as a worried father and as a citizen, I want to tell you we

are heading for disaster," Mr Barak, the Labour Party leader, told a news conference. "Innocent citizens, women and children... will die here needlessly, for no reason and with no consequence."

In Ramallah on the West Bank, defiant Palestinian legislators yesterday said they would hold a vote of no-confidence in Yasser Arafat's government to protest at its inaction.

The vote, scheduled for tomorrow, would be the first since the 88-member council was elected in January 1996.

Several members of Mr Arafat's Fatah faction were among 28 legislators who backed the vote, a protest against the government's failure to approve a budget or implement laws, and Mr Arafat's failure to implement reforms following reports of high-level corruption and mismanagement.

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Rouble trouble in the new world order

Rates soar

Average % yield for Russian government bonds within 90 days



As Asia's financial crisis turns Eurasian, Guardian writers examine the source and impact of the pressure on a currency protected by Boris Yeltsin at the cost of millions of livelihoods

Larry Elliott
Economics Editor

BACK IN 1990, when communism collapsed and Germany was reunited, George Bush talked about the creation of a new world order based on *laissez-faire* capitalism. "We know what works," he intoned gravely. "Free markets work." Free-market capitalism had emerged triumphant from the long fight against socialism and the blueprint would be exported across the globe. The prescription was universal — open up markets, scrap controls on capital, bear down on inflation, privatise.

Russia provided the perfect testbed for the gurus of *laissez-faire*. After more than 70 years of command economy, its 147 million people were effectively turned into laboratory mice for a gigantic experiment in free-market economics.

So far, things have not quite gone according to plan. Far from seeing the "end of history", as Francis Fukuyama promised, the 1990s have seen unprecedented mayhem across the globe.

First there was the deep recession in the United States and Britain, then the speculative attacks on the Exchange Rate Mechanism. In late 1994, while unemployment in Europe was climbing to 18 million, hot money flooding in and out of Mexico triggered a financial collapse last year a run on the Thai baht sent the dominoes tumbling across east Asia.

Now it is Russia's turn to feel the power of unfettered global financial markets, with interest rates jacked up to 150 per cent to stem the speculative flow out of the rouble. Economists say persistently dear money is the last thing Russia needs, but in the short-term there is no alternative.

Overall, the global economy in the 1990s has been marked by regular and virulent bouts of financial instability which have destabilised economies, reduced growth and increased poverty in the countries affected. Financial speculators, on the other hand, have done

extremely well. When their gambles have paid off they have cleaned up; when they have stood to lose vast sums, the International Monetary Fund has stepped in to prevent banks going under.

The freedom of capital to move around the world at will has increased the risk of chain reactions. Analysts believe Russia has caught a dose of "Asian flu", and that there is a real risk of the contagion being passed on to other emerging markets, such as Brazil, or returned with redoubled virulence to the Far East.

Brian Henry, professor of economics at the London Business School, said: "This is what you get when you have free capital movements. We have gone too far with the liberalisation process. The speed with which money can move around the global economy causes instability and a hard instinct."

He says Russia needs fundamental economic reforms and is desperately short of long-term investment. He also believes that the one-size-fits-all IMF remedy of scrapping capital controls may have made stability and growth more difficult to achieve.

Professor Richard Layard of the London School of Economics, who has advised the Yeltsin government, agrees, and says the IMF and G8 need to step in with a \$10 billion stabilisation fund to put a floor under the rouble and tame speculation. But there are signs that some of the *laissez-faire* devotees are starting to have second thoughts.

Earlier this year the World Bank chief economist, Joseph Stiglitz, strongly attacked the "Washington Consensus", saying: "All too often the dogma of liberalisation became an end in itself, not a means of achieving a better financial system."

The IMF is now split between those who still adhere to the dogma and those who are starting to ask why Chile, with strict controls on hot money, has emerged unscathed from the recent financial turbulence. In Santiago they have a simple answer: prevention is better than cure.

Days of wine and wilting roses for stranded holidaymakers

Tom Whitehouse in Moscow

PREOCCUPIED with the price of roses, threatened holidays and imminent economic collapse, Russians yesterday braced for devaluation.

"I buy all my flowers abroad and with the rouble going down everything is going to be more expensive," said Galina Levchinko, a florist.

Most consumer goods are imported, so a weaker currency has an immediate inflationary impact. Wealthy Russians are also angry. "Looks like my summer

holiday in Europe is off," said Vera Tychenko, a student at Moscow University. "For a woman of my age, travelling abroad is one of the few new freedoms I can really value, but now it's going to be too expensive."

As governments all over the world know, middle classes regard their currency as a national virility symbol. The few Russians who have grown accustomed to shopping holidays could prove a more vocal source of opposition than the millions of unpaid miners, teachers and soldiers whose complaints have long been ignored.



A hungry pensioner looks for leftovers in a rubbish bin in Moscow yesterday. Russians are braced for a currency devaluation that would hit spending power

PHOTOGRAPH: MICHAEL METZEL

Greedy banks starved of cash as Muscovites rely on their wallets

James Meek in Moscow

INHERITING the *macho* Soviet idea that only homosexuals would carry big purses, Russians call the bulging leather bags "pederastki". The outside wallets, preferably adorned with Gucci labels, have become a symbol of Moscow's new rich. The bulges are cash, great wads of it.

Seven years after the collapse of communism, a decade after the first commercial banks opened their doors, Russians have yet to embrace personal banking. There are no chequebooks. There are few credit cards. Keeping your money in a bank is still regarded as an act of madness.

"What's the sense? Inflation is higher than the interest rates they pay, and the risks are too high," said a partner in a power generation company. "Our banks collapse... [they] are practically incapable of keeping accounts confidential. Many criminal elements are working in the banks."

Most businessmen, whose savings should be fuelling the economy, open small accounts for only one reason — to get a credit card for overseas trips, so they do not have to declare how much money they are taking with them.

Fear, suspicion, the shadow economy, a greedy, self-destructive banking system — all these factors led to the latest assault on the teetering rouble.

Economists and financiers were clamouring yesterday for emergency loans to stave off a devaluation that they say would have no lower limit once begun.

Yet without a reform of the deformed economy there is no guarantee an injection of up to \$6 billion would bring anything more than short-term relief.

According to Andrei

Piontkowski, a political commentator, the economy is so distorted that every subject of it becomes an accomplice to, or a victim of, some form of cheating — usually both. "Why don't the miners have money?" he asked, referring to the unpaid coal workers. "Because the consumers of their coal don't pay for it. And yet the mine bosses go on supplying the coal. Why? Because the consumers give them 5 per cent of the cost, in cash, in their pockets."

Economists say there is not enough money in circulation, although they disagree about the cause. The commercial banking system seems to be the prime culprit. Many banks — whose desperate selling of shares to meet their obligations caused this week's stock market crash — will probably go under whether or not the rouble is devalued, and optimists hope

better ones will emerge. "Russia's banks aren't big enough," said Rupert Rucker, emerging markets manager for small companies at Robert Fleming in London. "The entire banking assets of Russia are smaller than those of the Royal Bank of Scotland... Most of the money's either gone abroad or it's hidden under mattresses."

"That's not going to go into banks until people have confidence in the banks and the government."

Analysts suggest Russians have a staggering \$30 billion in cash stashed away. About \$15 billion is thought to have left the country last year. Despite the crisis, many observers sympathise with the government, saying it has taken steps in the right direction. "They've done a hell of a lot," said Mr Rucker. "They've just got bad PR. And they've got an awful lot more to do."

Three wise men pass judgment

LEFT

Moisei Gelman, economic commentator for Pravda newspaper

AN ARTIFICIAL liquidity shortage has been created, leading to an imbalance in the turnover of goods and money. This has created the non-payment crisis, including non-payment of taxes. This forces the government to borrow.

In Russia, 90 per cent of goods produced are not made in response to monetary demand. Money circulates in speculative markets. Because of the lack of money, inflation has fallen, but official estimates of inflation are still three times too low.

The shortage of roubles in circulation and inflation are the main reasons for the crisis. The panic in east Asia, plus the size of the debt pyramid, nudged events over the edge.

Devaluation is necessary. Increasing interest rates will not solve the problem. To normalise economic turnover, more money should be issued. But for this, we need to be inspired by the dogmas of pseudo-monetarism, the only solution is devaluation.

CENTRE

Mikhail Berger, editor of Sevodnya newspaper

ONE of the main reasons for this severe crisis is the tendency of our top officials to speak without choosing their words carefully.

Two weeks ago, the head of the central bank, Sergei Dubinin, and the finance minister, Mikhail Zadornov, said that if the policy of borrowing money using bonds persisted, the country could expect a financial crisis. A month ago, Mr Dubinin

spoke of a possible devaluation. Last Friday the prime minister, Sergei Kiriyenko, said IMF money would be needed to redeem bonds. As a result, the market crashed.

There are no purely economic reasons for what is happening now. It's a sociological thing.

The situation has started to correct itself. The government must take a tougher approach towards tax evaders. Within a few days interest rates could begin to fall.

RIGHT

Al Breach, economist for the Russian-European Centre for Economic Policy, Moscow

THE Russian economy was improving well in 1997. Then the Asian crisis came along and revealed three underlying problems.

You have a large budget deficit, but that has begun to be sorted out. The second problem is that the banking system is terrible — Russians are not using it.

The third difficulty is that Russia has too much rouble-denominated debt. Because local banks do not have enough money to buy government debt, foreigners have been allowed to buy rouble bonds. When they realised the banking system was weak they began to demand higher interest rates.

Paying these further reduced the central bank's reserves, which squeezed the amount of money in the economy, which weakened the Russian banking system. What is needed now is a strong signal from Western governments that they will lend money to increase the reserves. That would calm things down while the problems are tackled.



A worker at a bureau de change adjusts exchange rates in central Moscow yesterday

PHOTOGRAPH: IVAN SECRETAREV

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Analysis Consumer choice

Big name brands have taken umbrage at seeing their upmarket products on offer at down market prices. Now the saga has taken a fresh twist with allegations of sales of fake goods. **Mark Milner** and **Dan Atkinson** look at the tussle that has set super marques against supermarkets.

Desirable designers in supermarket sweep

Alongside the family groceries, shoppers at 300 Tesco stores around the country could yesterday pick up a World Cup football shirt. To the delight, no doubt, of parents pestered by offspring enthused by the imminence of France 98, the shirts were priced at £3 — a 25 per cent discount in the usual retail price. The shirt maker, Umbro, however, was less than pleased.

Behind the sudden availability of thousands of England and Scotland soccer shirts amid the ranks of baked bean tins and packets of cereal lies a bitter power struggle. In one corner is a range of companies which have built up their products into premium brands — name like Calvin Klein or Nike — that consumers will pay lightly to be seen to be wearing or owning. In the opposite corner are supermarkets and, latterly, warehouse clubs, which argue that

the designer label phenomenon is little more than a "brand tax" on consumers. The supermarkets are now seeking to offer branded goods on their own terms.

The key to the battle is access to sought-after labels. The brand owners, jealous of their products' status and the prices they can command, seek to control the outlets through which they are sold, a strategy known as selective distribution. Those deemed "inappropriate outlets" try to circumvent the restraints by picking up stock, in defiance of the brand owners' prohibition, through the so-called grey market.

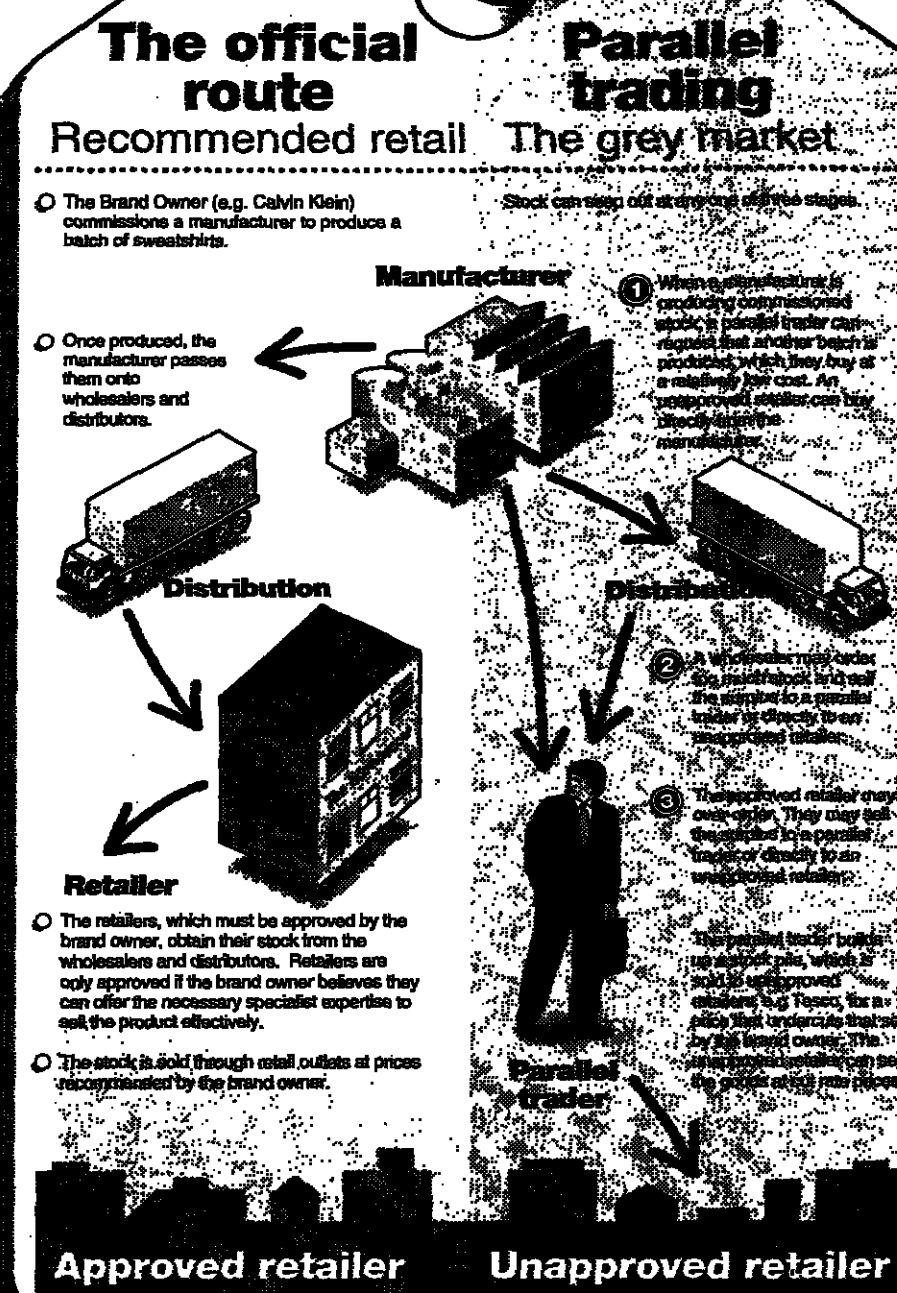
Insiders say the grey market draws on three main sources. First there are the manufacturers who produce the branded goods under licence. They may over-produce and make the surplus available to the grey market. Manufacturing is often carried on at a series of locations around the world, making it hard to keep track of exactly how much has been produced. Then there are wholesalers who distribute with the brand

owners approval but who may pass on part of their stock to less than approved channels. Thirdly there are approved retailers who may be prepared to let part of their stock go at a lower margin to the supermarket.

The grey market system is not illegal, though it might not correspond to everyone's view of best business practice. In this slightly shadowy world (sources, inevitably, are a closely guarded secret), middlemen play a key role. Their job is to alert unapproved retailers to opportunities to get hold of branded goods or to help them accumulate sufficient stock for them to be able to run a high profile sales campaign featuring a top name brand. Occasionally stock can be picked up by the warehouse full. On other occasions it can take several months, perhaps even a year, to achieve critical mass through accumulation.

The brand owners' anguish is not hard to understand. Earlier this year Tesco offered Nike Air Max Metallic trainers at £50, half the usual price

Shades of grey



Get your fit on... Tesco takes the lead on England strip

PHOTOGRAPH BY GRAHAM TURNER

that they are the consumers' friend, that they are bringing price competition to the market and "aspirational" products within the scope of more customers. Not surprisingly the brand owners have a less charitable view. They reckon the high profile sales of cut-price designer goods are designed to get more shoppers through supermarket check-outs.

There are those who wonder whether the designer labellers versus the supermarkets is all a fuss over nothing. Clive Vaughan at retail analysts and consultancy group Verdict notes that while the discounts are steep, the volumes of designer label goods actually sold by the supermarkets is relatively modest. Tesco is reported to have sold some £20 million worth of grey market products last year. That compares with total turnover for Tesco of not much short of £18 billion.

Promotions like the World Cup soccer shirts are essentially opportunistic while what customers tend to look for is reliability of supply, according to Mr Vaughan.

"They want to know when they go into a shop they can be certain that the products they want will be there."

THOUGH they attract the most publicity, designer labels are not alone in offering scope for what is sometimes called parallel trading. Manufacturers may seek to present and price a product differently in different markets. Take Stella Artois lager — "reassuringly expensive" in Britain, but in its native Belgium it is a mainstream lager and considered nothing special by the discriminating Belgian beer drinker. Entrepreneurs who can buy goods in a low priced market and then ship it to one where they command a higher price stand to make money.

In a bid to halt the trade, producers draw up tight supply agreements with their wholesalers in low-priced markets prohibiting sale to customers outside the national boundaries. But there are ways and means

around this. One of the most common is for the wholesaler to set up a dummy company inside the low-priced market and to "sell" to that company, which proceeds to sell on to a parallel trader in a high-priced market. Paul Carratu, of London private investigator Carratu International, said that what ensues is a cat-and-mouse game across Europe, as multinationals employ teams of private detectives to find out which wholesalers are leaking stock abroad.

Exchange rate differentials provide an opportunity, too. Back in 1992, when the Italian lira fell out of the exchange rate mechanism, French car makers found their vehicles suddenly much more expensive in lire terms. To keep market share in Italy, one maker, Renault, held its price in local currency terms at the expense of its profit margins. It did so only to find that Italian dealers were overordering for their domestic market in order to sell cars back into France where higher prices prevailed. In theory the introduction of the single currency might curb parallel trading by removing exchange rate

opportunities. Observers note however that it might encourage the trend by making it easier to spot differentials between national markets.

In the meantime, however, attention will remain focused on the struggle between the up-market brand-owners and those who reckon image can still stand a price cut. Their struggle is far from over. Indeed the Hiltiger court action might open a whole new chapter. Still, as the World Cup opens next month, thousands of British parents will be able to sit back as their children romp around in their favourite colours more cheaply than they might have expected. Unless, of course, the team switches to the away strip. But that is another ball game altogether.

Graphics sources: Asda Superstores; Tesco Stores Ltd. Graphics: Finbar Sheehy, David Turner. Research: Jane Crinion. Mark Milner is Deputy Financial Editor of The Guardian. Dan Atkinson is a Financial Reporter for The Guardian and co-author of the newly-published book "The Age of Insecurity".



Tariq Ali on Pakistan's bomb 12

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The nuclear precipice

Time to set targets

PAKISTAN'S test has taken south Asia across a dangerous threshold — and the rest of the world with it. The nuclear club has been enlarged for the first time since China joined it in 1964. This time it brings in not one single power but two, both already locked in deep-set hostility, across a common border and with a slow-burning fuse in Kashmir. All this is happening in a post-cold war world where healthy economic rivalry under the flag of globalisation was supposed to replace out-dated territorial antagonisms. Western complacency could hardly have got it more seriously wrong.

That complacency had already given way to a sense of hopelessness after the Indian tests. Suddenly the anti-proliferation rhetoric in which the Nuclear Five clothe their own arsenals was revealed to be threadbare. On Wednesday, the eve of Pakistan's test — Washington was still dithering about what sort of guarantees might induce Rawalpindi to exercise restraint. The only one which appeared to suffice — a categorical assurance to come to Pakistan's assistance if it were threatened by India — was not on offer. Nuclear guarantees so freely extended in the cold war are no longer available.

The Birmingham G8 summit had already set a dismal example, deploring the "nuclear tide" but failing to come up with any idea on how to turn it back. The only strategy was to urge India to "come into the Comprehensive Test-ban Treaty process".

No doubt the same invitation will now be extended to Pakistan.

It is only a few years since the discovery of Saddam Hussein's plans in the Gulf war led to much heart-searching on the subject of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. How much time and effort since then has been expended on exploring the nooks and crannies of Iraq's putative capability. This concern over "rogue" states has been a diversion from the real task of constructing an international environment which would deter those with more sober, but equally alarming, nuclear intentions. It is not simply that India and Pakistan have lifted themselves above the nuclear "threshold". It is that by doing so they have reduced whatever deterrent value that threshold may have in future. It is unlikely that the two countries will line up readily to accept the CTBT, but if they do, will this not legitimise the route they have pioneered for others to follow?

The charge of double standards against the Nuclear Five remains unanswerable on any principled ground. In fact the only defence for their monopoly has been that of history: it happened this way, so let's at least make sure it remains this way. The moment that the monopoly is breached then the argument falls. The question now is not how to persuade new nuclear members to sign up to the CTBT — once they have tested. It is how to dissuade them from beginning to take this road. The only way of doing this, we now see even more clearly, is to hold out the prospect — in real and achievable terms — of progress towards a nuclear-free world (a goal to which the Five have paid lip-service in the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty). This would require a declaration endorsing minimum deterrence as an immediate goal — and minimum means tens, not hundreds or thou-

sands, of weapons — plus abolition of nuclear weapons as the longer-term aim, with a definite timetable and targets for both. Such a project can no longer be dismissed as starry-eyed or impracticable. The Five are now obliged to answer a simple question: by what other means can more nuclear proliferation be prevented?

Pay-off for poor

Wage floor is part of package

THE TIMING seemed significant. On Wednesday afternoon, the 400-page report from the Low Pay Commission recommending a minimum wage of £3.60 an hour came thudding down on the Prime Minister's desk. By one of those quirks of fate, a few hours later Tony Blair was due to speak to the Confederation of British Industry's annual dinner. And, by an even bigger coincidence, the news leaked out an hour before the Prime Minister sat down for quail, lamb and creme brûlée in the ballroom of the Grosvenor House hotel flanked by the CBI's top brass.

So does this mean a victory for the bosses and a defeat for the workers? In a crude sense, it obviously does. The CBI has made it clear that it can live with a figure of £3.60 an hour — pretty much the going rate already in fast food restaurants, for example — while the TUC was looking for something closer to £4 an hour. Having been thwarted by the CBI over recognition, the unions have apparently now also lost the battle over the minimum wage.

But once the dust has settled, the unions may find that there are reasons to be relatively cheerful about the deal on offer. The first is that the principle of the minimum wage has been established: Britain's

labour market may be flexible but it will no longer be unfettered and unregulated. The Government has accepted that it has a permanent role in the wage-setting process. The second is that the lower rate — coupled with the £3.20 level for those aged 18-21 and the complete exemption for the under-18s — will almost certainly mean that the harmful consequences of the minimum wage predicted by the right will not materialise.

The reason the Government supports a lower rate for the under-21s is that it fears a higher level would jeopardise its election pledge to reduce youth unemployment through the New Deal. That no longer looks a real risk and indeed there may be positive spin-offs for the economy overall if employers seek to improve the productivity of their staff. Finally, the minimum wage needs to be seen not in isolation but as part of a package with the changes in the Budget, particularly the Working Families Tax Credit. According to evidence presented to the Commission by the Government, a lone parent with one child working a 35-hour week would be on £6 an hour, not £3.60, once the tax credit, housing benefit and child benefit were added to basic pay.

Of course, the proposals are not perfect from the TUC's point of view. The Government's message will cut little ice, for example, with low-paid workers without children. But in time, they may come to be seen as both reasonable and workable.

Mobile manners

Hanging up the Queen

"ONE would like to have a one-to-one with you." We cannot know for certain if those were Her Majesty's exact words when she called Tony Blair on his mobile phone, but

it's fun to imagine. Just as Kate Moss dreamed of connecting with Elvis Presley, John McCarthy with Yuri Gagarin and Ian Wright with Martin Luther King, we now learn that the Queen's fondest hope was to have a one-to-one with her Prime Minister. But — just like the celebrities in the TV ads — her dream was frustrated.

Apparently the monarch called Mr Blair just as he was boarding a plane to Belfast last month. "It was the first time she had called on the mobile," he told a studio audience for the Des O'Connor show, to be broadcast next week. "But the pilot turned round and said, 'Switch the phone off.'" The PM protested that it was the Queen on the line, but the pilot was adamant. "I don't care who it is, mate, rules are rules," he said. Mr Blair promptly told Her Majesty he couldn't speak right now, and that he would have to call her back.

The politics of this move are interesting: not only did Tony Blair hang up on the monarch, he also saw fit to tell a primetime audience all about it. Just as Ronald Reagan let it be known that he fell asleep during Cabinet meetings — so downgrading the importance of his colleagues — was Mr Blair ever-so-subtly putting the Palace in its place? Equally fascinating is the inevitable debate the PM has stirred on cell phone protocol: the manners of the mobile. Is it rude to start a call in a public place like a restaurant, a train — or even a plane?

Perhaps Her Majesty will ponder these thoughts. Or, now that she's in the mobile habit, maybe she'll choose to call a few other politicians.

Perhaps she should start with Ian Paisley, who this week attacked her as "foolish" and a "parrot". After all, she could open her remarks with a few choice words of support, by reminding Dr Paisley, "The future is Orange".

Letters to the Editor

From jeune to Arsene

AS the original meaning of *jeune* (Simon Hoggart's *Diary*, Saturday, May 23) is indeed long gone. As with so many words, the metaphorical sense becomes so much stronger, the original literal sense is almost lost. Your suggestion of association with *jeune* sounds plausible, though almost impossible to authenticate. I have studied the examples in our 323-million word bank of English; all examples tend towards the "unimpeachable" sense. I'm afraid Humphrey Dumpty operates; as much as we may regret the passing of particular meanings, none of us can hold back the changes in language, not even lexicographers. *Diana Trevelyan*, Editorial director, Collins English Dictionaries, Glasgow.

YOU reported (May 26) that Desmond Wilcox (57), producer of the BBC documentary *The Human Body*, had been taken by air ambulance to hospital for an operation in which veins from his leg were grafted on to his coronary artery. You have since reported he was in fact 67, was not involved in *The Human Body*, was not moved by air ambulance, not a graft, would it not have been simpler to say you were not talking about Desmond Wilcox? *Mary Moens*, Edinburgh.

AS Baker (Letters, May 28) says: "Isn't it time this country stopped selling arms to anybody?" Why not stop making the things? *Tony Angarde*, Oxford.

SO Arsene might sign Arsenal for Arsenal (Sport, May 27). Surely this would be a fundamental error. *Harry Bovis*, London.

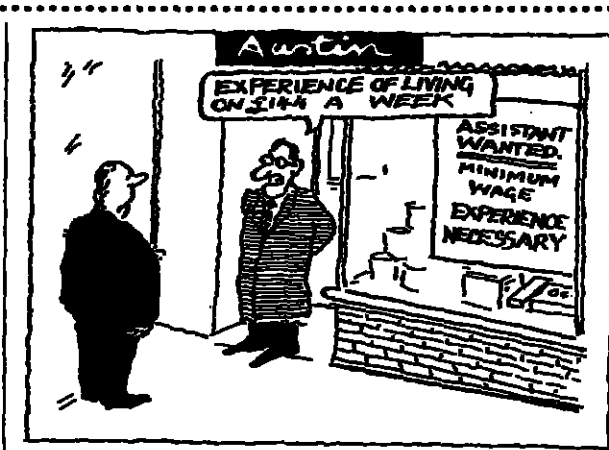
An inspector calls foul

WHILE offering the proverbial duck's back to the cascade of personal abuse from Roy Hattersley (A ridiculous inspector, May 28), there are three issues I cannot ignore. First, I refute categorically, as I did before the parliamentary education sub-committee in February, the allegation that I have ever tampered with HMI evidence in order to make a report on a local education authority — or any other subject — reflect my personal views. As Her Majesty's Chief Inspector and head of HMI, it is my job to ensure that our reports and publications are based on rigorous inspection techniques and sound evidence and that they convey their important messages clearly and unequivocally. If

that sometimes requires editing and redrafting, so be it. Second, decisions on whether to publish a report or, indeed, to produce a report at the end of a piece of work are based purely on whether Ofsted corporately believes there is something worth saying, which will contribute significantly to public knowledge and the educational debate. If not, we prefer to find a better use of the public resources with which we are entrusted. Thirdly, I do not flatter myself that the question of my contract as Chief Inspector is of remote interest to the general public. I have never sought to "encourage" the press to speculate about it. I have simply, and increasingly, responded to questions prompted by others, such as Lord Hattersley, who

seem to be unhealthily obsessed by it. *Chris Woodhead*, Ofsted, London.

ROY Hattersley's objections to the Chief Inspector are understandable, but he overlooks the fact that Mr Woodhead is doing us all a favour by convincing more and more people that mass compulsory schooling is obsolete. In the climate he has created it is possible for the principal of Banbury School, Anita Hignam OBE, to declare that "we are in the death throes of secondary schools..." without being the subject of ridicule. This outcome may well be unintended but it is, nevertheless, a considerable achievement. *Roland Melham*, Nottingham.



Female, fifty and fed up

HAS Yvonne Roberts (Who's Afraid of 50? May 28) forgotten the sapping effects of the menopause with its constant tiredness and sudden depletion of energy levels at awkward times? The older generation is declining and dying and all the while, we think "in due course, it will be my turn". Facing up to those unpleasant facts is the problem. Cher may have acknowledged it, but failed to find a solution. Is there any real help on offer other than cosmetics and BHT? *Miquette Roberts*, London.

THANK you, Polly Toynbee, for mentioning the silent women who have sacrificed

their self-sufficiency in the name of motherhood (May 26). We come from the in-between generation, the ones who were expected to nurture a family and be intelligent companions to our spouses. We are married to men who don't earn a fortune, we never had sufficient money to take out a pension so we work part-time and can't afford to give up our jobs to retrain. We spent our meagre savings on music lessons and field trips for our children.

So here we are, daughters of the sixties, still beholden to a man for our livelihoods in middle age, with more of the same ahead of us. Equality? *Lyn Wood*, Worcester Park, Surrey.

God knows

ALAN Pavelet (Letters, May 28) asks me to inform him who was responsible for the 3,000 killings in 25 years in Northern Ireland: God or people. The answer in the case of sectarian murders is both. *Tony Morris*, Oxford.

MY father's point (Letters, May 28) was that human beings, and human beings alone, are responsible for their

past, including the tragedy of Northern Ireland. But we alone are also responsible for our own destiny, including the forging of a future peace. *Helen Morris*, Brentwood, Essex.

THANK you, Alan Pavelet, for confirming what I had always feared — when bad things happen, people must take the blame when it's good, God can take the credit. Give me humanism every time. *Dr Bryan Leak*, London.

Turning our backs on the POWs

MY uncle was imprisoned by the Japanese for just over three years. He died of a heart attack in 1958. In 1988, I was offered an exchange teaching post in Kumamoto, Japan. I could never have accepted this without the blessing of my aunt. By supporting my move to Japan, she was endorsing the principles of peace and forgiveness. Living in Japan for three years, I learnt of the suffering of Nagasaki and Hiroshima and had the honour of meeting Nagasaki survivors in 1989. My home-stay family told me how, after the war, they were so hungry they had to eat weeds and grass to survive. They were truly humbled and shamed by the past and, by offering me their hospitality, were building their own bridges of reconciliation. Today wars are destroying the lives of thousands of people. Racial hatred is sadly still with us — when will we

learn? Showing pictures of ex-POWs burning the Japanese flag 50 years after the end of the war is not the way forward. Had my uncle still been alive, I am sure he would have been shamed by their behaviour. *Frances Compe*, Hertford.

I WAS a Japanese prisoner of war in Changchi camp for three and a half years and suffered the privations and diseases resulting from the callous attitude of a regime which considered prisoners to be low-grade humans. As a Christian, I believe that such suffering should be endured without subsequent bitterness. This attitude is worthwhile because it swells the morality which is essential if humanity is to survive successfully in the next century. Accordingly, I was horrified to realise that, after 50 years, there were still hun-

dreds of ex-POWs who seem to be incapable of forgiveness. *John Wharton*, Altrincham, Cheshire.

WE people of African Caribbean descent have always asked for reparations for the atrocities which were committed during the 400 bleak years of slavery. Where is our money, our apology and those of the host nation who would be liberal enough to fight for justice on our behalf? *Noel Blackman*, London.

DURING my period of National Service with the RAF in 1948, I overheard two flight sergeants recounting their war-time experiences. The one which had them both in stitches concerned one of them raping a child on a Cairo street while the distraught mother threw her skirts in the air and shrieked, "No, no, fuck me, Tommy!" War brings out the worst in all nations. *Gordon Simpson*, Hastings, E Sussex.

Corn on the cod

Bel Littlejohn

AS PER U, a lot of people have been coming up to me in the street, bristling with excitement. "Tell me, Bel," they say, "what exactly is the New Travel Writing?" To which I reply that, like the New Millennium Experience, the New Romantics, the New Avengers, New Age Travelers, the New Christie Min-

strels and New Improved Omo, the New Travel Writing is an exciting new way of doing something just like it's been done for hundreds of years. Okay, there have been travel books, and there have even been travel books by women, for god's sake. But except for a handful of forgotten authors — Mrs Trollope, Dervla Murphy and Lucy Irvine, and, yes, Beryl Markham and Rose Macaulay and Shirley MacLaine, and I suppose we should add Joan Didion and Elspeth Huxley, and then admittedly there's also Jan Morris and Freya Stark and, okay then, Karen von Blixen and Rebecca West — but apart from them there has never, ever been a woman who managed to combine the two genres of memoir and travel writing; hence the crying need for the word "new". But let's waste no more

time in explanation. Today I print an exclusive extract from my contribution to Amazonian: The Penguin Book of Women's New Travel Writing published yesterday. I Capture A Cod recounts the very real perils and hazards that lay in wait for me on my pioneering journey into the very heart of Knightsbridge, up the up-escalator, down the down-escalator, through the Harrods food hall and right up to the fresh fish counter where I found myself staring deep into the quizzical yet somehow strangely unknowing eyes of a dead cod. It juxtaposes the trip with a searingly intimate, at times almost unbearably painful memoir of my tortured childhood. Today's extract describes my trip, by turns hair-raising and calming, on an escalator — and the devastating way in which it triggered me along a terrifying journey into my own past. Here it comes

again. The escalator. That great snake, weaving its way out of the jungle of commerce. And then back into it again. Escalators going up. Up. Up. Up. And escalators going down. Down. Down. Down. Up and down, up and down. Like life itself, only in straighter lines. I summon up a courage I never knew I had and step, first tentatively, then with great boldness, on to the up escalator. "Standing on that escalator, I am borne ceaselessly back into my own childhood. The time I spent my cornflakes on the kitchen table and my mother forced me to wipe them up with a damp cloth. I have often asked myself why — why? — my mother treated me like that, on that grim October morning one day in early June. Was her action a relic of the persecution she felt at the hands of her own mother all those decades ago when she dropped a tea-cup

on the floor and it shattered into a hundred shards (broken broken broken) and was told to clear it all up with a dustpan and brush? "And what of her mother, whose own childhood was irreparably damaged by what she would later refer to only as "the teaspoon incident" — a dark episode when she dropped a teaspoon and her father told her to kneel down and pick it up. These were the dark days, long before the advent of Childline. "Yet my grandmother had suffered, too, at the hands of her grandmother, whose childhood diaries recount the pitiful day she stepped into a puddle, got her shoes wet — and was asked to change them by her governess. Five generations of women. Five generations of journeys into our own tormented pasts. And still the escalator travels upwards, ever upwards. Will it never cease? Abruptly, it

ceases. Ahead of me is haberdashery, to the left of me stationery, to my right, kitchenware, gift-wrapping and children's shoes. Where am I? Who am I? Why am I in this place? And where the hell are the fish? In the same situation, a male traveller would plough on regardless, ever the imperialist. Unlike them, I choose to interact with the natives. They tell me that to find the fish, like T S Eliot before me, I must return to that place from whence I set forth. Yes, there is only one route. And it's down. "Down, down, down, down. It's hard to convey in mere words the sensation of riding on a down escalator. But above all, it reminds me of the time I sank into a deep dark hole of depression after my ex-husband with typical lack of regard for anyone but his own little self decided to up and ..."

Now read on.

We, the youth, will have to live with the nuclear disasters

WE AT the SOAS Students' Union condemn all nuclear testing, especially in the south Asia region. The international community has singularly failed in its duty and responsibility to prevent escalation of the situation. Narrow-minded attitudes and national interest have made our future precarious. The lives of billions are hanging over the precipice. A large section of our students come from the south Asian region and the threat of a nuclear arms race affects them personally.

Any action taken by the British government must be even-handed and balanced. The government should bear in mind the history of the region and sensitivities of the people, as well as the role of successive British governments in the recent history of the sub-continent. The British government should also bear in mind the multicultural make-up of British society when making any decisions.

The international community should learn from this and strengthen its resolve against jack-boot nationalism and use all means necessary to bring about peace. What is needed now is the spirit of 1968.

If the path to war is taken then the scale of devastation across the world will be horrific. We plead with the diplomats and the politicians to remember that when they are in their graves, we, the future, the youth, will be left with their mistakes. *All Naqvvi*, President, Students' Union, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.

We do not publish letters where only an e-mail address is supplied; please include a full postal address. We may edit letters; shorter ones are more likely to appear. We regret we cannot acknowledge those not used. The Country Diary is on page 14.

SUDAN CRISIS

Today in Sudan thousands of people are facing starvation — a crisis caused by war and drought. People are dying already.

We urgently need money to provide food, clean water, medical help, and sanitation now. We're also supplying seeds and tools for people to plant crops for the next harvest.

We're pressing for peace as the only long-term solution to the problems in Sudan.

But people need your help now. With your support we can help prevent widespread famine.

Your gift will save lives.

Disasters Emergency Committee A registered charity
Participating agencies: British Red Cross, CAFOD, CARE International UK, Christian Aid, Concern Worldwide, Help the Aged, MERSUN, MSF, Oxfam, Save the Children, Tearfund, World Vision

Yes, I want to help people suffering in Sudan

I want to give ☐ £250 ☐ £100 ☐ £50 ☐ £250

Other £

☐ I enclose a cheque made payable to Sudan Crisis OR

☐ Please debit my Access/Visa, Switch, Diners Card/CAF

CharityCard/MasterCard (Circle One)

☐ Please tick here if you would like a receipt.

Signature Expiry Date

Title Forename Surname

Address Postcode

Complete coupon and return to:
Sudan Crisis, PO Box 999, London EC3A 9AA

Donation Line 0990 22 22 33

Alan Milne

Thinker with the humanist touch

IT WAS bad luck that, near to the end of the war in Europe, Alan Milne, the distinguished political philosopher who has died aged 76, lost his sight when a bullet hit him while he was commanding a bridgehead commando in Germany. It was especially bad luck as the bridge had already been seized by the River Aller but had failed to signal him. But it was good luck, Alan would say, that the bullet went exactly sideways through the bridge of his nose taking out both eyes but just missing the brain. So he was mentioned in despatches.

After his training for blindness at St Dunstan's, his academic career began at the London School of Economics. He was one of the many who went into the war in 1939 straight from school without too much thought for anything, he said, besides cricket, rugby and a conviction that war was inevitable and must be prepared for, but he came out with a great seriousness.

Some took to drink and some took to books in the long waiting for D-Day. Milne liked his beer and took to brewing it fearlessly and fearfully, long before the days of kits, which he only grudgingly accepted. But he also liked books. Many of his students at LSE met him through reading to him. Reading philosophy out loud and

slowly was highly educative, especially as his interest in the neo-Hegelian English idealists was already out of fashion by the post-war decade. Reading F H Bradley's metaphysics in *Experience and its Modes* was at least partial preparation for the coming of Michael Oakeshott.

Milne considered that the Harold Laski he heard lecture and began to work under (a PhD on Bentham and Cole-ridge) had become rhetorical more than thoughtful but he respected greatly the young Laski's critiques of sovereignty, advocacy of political and ethical pluralism and especially his secular, humanist version of T H Green's philosophical idealism — the duty of a state set in a society of public-spirited citizens to advance ethical progress. He regarded Laski's account of Green as a proto-ethical socialist as "going too far" in point of fact, but he plainly sympathised.

Milne's thinking, as it developed in a series of books, beginning with *The Social Philosophy of English Idealism* (1962) and *Freedom and Rights* (1968), seemed at first a rather old-fashioned, Victorian, rationalism, influenced by figures such as Leslie Stephens, Hobbes, G. E. Hughes, Maurice Godelier and Laski, who are no longer taken seriously by modern philosophers of whatever school. But slowly it came to one that all those who

now talk of human rights, especially those charters of rights drafted by well-meaning but most unphilosophical politicians and bureaucrats, had been making presuppositions that cannot be accounted for in the schools of modern philosophy. These are all, for different reasons, sceptical of such seemingly absolutist or essentialist ideas as human rights.

These presuppositions of ordinary thought about human rights (a term he took from the philosopher and historian R G Collingwood — in whose revival he played a major role) are all set out in his later writings: *The Right to Dissent* (1983), *Human Rights and Human Diversity* (1988) and *The Ethical Frontiers of the State* (1997). These are still against the tide but there are more and more reasons for people to go back to them.

HIS WORK was more recognised in the US than here, as shown by a year as a Commonwealth fellow at the University of California at Berkeley, followed by an invitation to the Institute for Advanced Studies at Princeton University.

He seemed to be very old-English in his stoicism and good humour but looked so very Scots, hardly surprising as the only child of Ewan Milne, a Fraserburgh businessman, and his Irish wife,

Dorothea Lovell. He grew up in Oxford, attending the Dragon School and then Up-pingham, but he came out of the army solid Labour, and remained so.

His private life was remarkable. A wartime marriage bore four children — including twins while he was still in St Dunstan's — but the marriage broke down when he began studying at LSE. He married one of his LSE readers, Anita Littlestone, and three children followed. She died in 1985 and the following year he married Susan Elkin, a close friend of them both from student days.

Old friends were precious to him. Seven close ones, who took finals the same year as he took his first, held a yearly reunion seminar — beer, pipe tobacco and real talk — and, when the first of them died, they endowed in 1992 the *Good Society* lecture series at LSE.

His second family grew up in Northern Ireland where he was reader in philosophy at Queen's University, Belfast. A pillar of the local humanists, he was umpire or buffer in some celebrated debates in the early days of the troubles between Catholic and Presbyterian theologians. If he ever used his blindness, it was to make it difficult to refuse invitations from him for what were then daring and unusual secular ecumenical cross-community occasions. He became professor of politics in



Milne... stoic with good humour

seemed more interested to exult in the result of the Irish referendums and to take pleasure to the last in his family. He was kind, questioning, loving and tough, with a developed ability to distinguish between personal, political and philosophical commitments.

Bernard Crick

Alan Milne, political philosopher and teacher, born April 30, 1922; died May 24, 1998

Helena McCarthy

Art of being young at heart

THE ACTRESS Helena McCarthy, who has died of a heart attack aged 89, was not an old person. She had incredible energy and was due to record an episode of the television series *Hattie Waite* in the next few days and had a casting interview for a TV commercial on the following day.

Such work had kept her busy in later years. She was the exploding granny in the Tango advertisements and a little old lady handbagging a waiter in a Pepsi commercial, which made her something of a cult figure in Spain. A couple of years ago she filmed a commercial in Morocco in which, dressed in leathers, she rode a Harley-Davidson. Yet she would probably prefer to be remembered for her more classically distinguished roles with the National Theatre and the Royal Shakespeare Company.

Ena, as she preferred to be known to family and friends, was 4ft 10ins tall but never let her size hamper her. Short in stature but never in character, she used to say. She didn't approve of feminism, she said, "but I think I am one". Born Helena Short in St Anne's, Lancashire, she was raised in Surrey. Her father, a tailor, was English while her mother was Irish — and her Irish blood was important to Helena. Her mother was opposed to her acting ambitions and so she was sent to teacher training college but, during summer seasons during the holidays. Her first job, aged

21, was playing a 12-year-old with Croydon repertory at the Old Grand Theatre. This was a time when amateur companies such as the Croydon Electrons hired professionals to play the leads. She was Tiana in their *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and played summer seasons at Southwold. She met Henry McCarthy doing *Merrie England* at Croydon in 1942 and they married in 1943. He was conscripted into the Metropolitan Police while she taught evacuees in Loughborough. Later, and for many years, they ran the Taverners company staging Shakespeare in Kent pubs around the hopfields.

While bringing up her family, Helena continued to teach and to act. She was in London home for 40 years. She became a jobbing actress again in the early 1960s and her subsequent TV credits are almost a ratings guide — *Casualty*, *The Bill*, *Inspector Morse*, *The Harry Enfield Show*, *Blackadder*, *Pauline*, *Lovejoy*, *Jonathan Creek*, *Trial and Retribution*, *Heartbeat*. She was also in *The Avengers* with Diana Rigg and *The Old Curiosity Shop* with Michelle Dotrice.

Her film credits include Michael Winner's remake of *The Wicked Lady*, with Faye Dunaway and John Gielgud. Recent theatre work includes *The Three Sisters* at the Manchester Royal Exchange, Peter Flannery's *Singer*, with Anthony Sher, for the Royal Shakespeare Company and



McCarthy... proving a big presence even with Derek Jacobi

PHOTOGRAPH BY NIAN KYNEL

the Chichester Festival tour of *Hadrian VII* with Derek Jacobi, who once said of her: "What's the point of being on stage with her? Nobody's looking at me". Helena adored the profession and the company of other actors, and many younger women saw her as a confidante. She continued to work while nursing her husband through illness until he died a few years ago. She leaves two daughters, Maire and Maggie, whom she encouraged to work in the theatre, and six grandchildren.

Robin Thornber

Lynda La Plante writes: The first time Helena McCarthy and I worked together was in a series called *Seekers*: the last time in a recent series, *Trial and Retribution*. I was very concerned that she would not be available as I had been told she was in Morocco and learning to ride a camel. Fortunately for me, Helena was able to juggle her many commitments to accept the role. She gave, as I knew she would, a stunning and very moving performance.

Helena confided in me that she was thinking about telling a little white lie about her

age. She was worried that it might lose her work. Only then did I know that this adorable lady, the life and soul of every wrap party and the most dedicated and consummate professional actress I have ever worked with, was in her eighties. Helena was so very young. She had a zest for life and adventure that never diminished. Her talent shone brightly and her presence will be greatly missed; she was kissed with sweetness.

Helena McCarthy, actress, born October 18, 1908; died May 11, 1998

Birthdays

Colin Amery, architectural writer and historian, 54; Michael Berkeley, composer, 50; Sir Douglas Black, former chief scientist to the Department of Health, 85; Sir Christopher Bland, chairman, BBC, 80; Katie Boyle (*Lady Sunder*), broadcaster, 68; Rupert Everett, actor, 38; Eleanor Fagan, opera and show choreographer, 68; Lt-Gen Sir Martin Garrod, EU administrator of Mostar, 63; Linda Esther Gray, opera singer, 60; Patricia Harris, former central president, Mothers' Union, 59; Sir Trevor Holdsworth, pianist, former chairman, National Power, 71; Bob Hope, comedian, 95; Ukyo Katayama, racing driver, 35; Prof Robert Knox, bacteriologist, 93; Alan Langlands, chief executive, NHS, 46; Sir James Marjoribanks, chairman, Scotland in Europe, 87; Nanette Newman, actress and writer, 58; Martin Pipe, racehorse trainer, 53; Francis Rossi, Status Quo rock singer and guitarist, 49; Alvin Schockenmole, showjumper, 63; Doug Scott, mountaineer, 57; Carl Toms, stage designer, 71; Prof Louis Wain, agricultural scientist, 87; Iannis Xenakis, composer, architect and engineer, 76.

Letter

Colin Lyent writes: The obituary of Patrick Wall (May 20) underestimated his devotion to the South African apartheid regime. In the 1964 general election Sir Patrick declared that "one of the main issues at the election is the safeguarding of White Christian Civilisation south of the Zambezi". He went on to say: "I don't think these 'Christian soldiers' the military means to defend this 'civilisation', being a fierce opponent of banning arms sales to South Africa."

Death Notices

ROSEMARY Barbara, suddenly on 28 May 1998. A rare and remarkable woman. She lived a life of great achievement and was a devoted mother, wife and friend. She is survived by her husband, David, and three children. Burial at St Andrew's Church, London, on Tuesday 26 May 1998, at 11.30 am. Donations to the British Heart Foundation may be sent to St Andrew's Church, 100 St Andrew's Road, London E14 6JG. Tel: 020 7463 1111. Fax: 020 7463 1112. E-mail: rosemary@btinternet.com

ROSEMARY Barbara, widow of Professor William Russell, much loved mother, grandmother and great-grandmother, died peacefully at home in Cambridge on May 28, aged 94. Funeral at Cambridge City Cemetery, West Hill, on Wednesday, June 3, at 11.30 am. Donations to the British Heart Foundation may be sent to St Andrew's Church, 100 St Andrew's Road, London E14 6JG. Tel: 020 7463 1111. Fax: 020 7463 1112. E-mail: rosemary@btinternet.com

VERONICA Heath writes: On 27th May, Richard Clough, 59, died after a long illness. He was a devoted husband and father, and a very kind and generous person. He is survived by his wife, Joan, and three children. Burial at St Andrew's Church, London, on Tuesday 26 May 1998, at 11.30 am. Donations to the British Heart Foundation may be sent to St Andrew's Church, 100 St Andrew's Road, London E14 6JG. Tel: 020 7463 1111. Fax: 020 7463 1112. E-mail: veronica@btinternet.com

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CORRECTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

IN OUR Page 1 report, Japanese to challenge ex-PoWs, May 26, we said "The Japanese counter-offensive is being co-ordinated by the Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Japan Society..." We have already carried a letter from the Chamber, dissociating itself from any such thing. The Japan Society, similarly,

wishes it to be made clear that it has not been involved in any activities designed to counteract demonstrations by British former prisoners of the Japanese. We have never had any evidence to support the statement we made and therefore apologise to both organisations.

IN OUR television review, G2, Page 19, May 19, of *Secret History: the Porn King, the Stripper and the Bent Coppers*, which was broadcast on Monday May 18, we suggested that no police officers were jailed as a result of the anti-

corruption investigation. In fact, as we had reported in an article about the programme published in the Guardian on May 12, 12 detectives were jailed.

IN AN accompanying note to a report on the Policy and Politics page, Page 13, May 27, we said that Asperger's syndrome, a form of autism, did not affect women. One in 10 sufferers is female.

IN A REPORT headed *Magistrate faces sack in disability claim row*, Page 8, May 26, we referred to "a car financed by the Government's Motability scheme". Motability, although it does get some fund-

ing from the Government, is a charity, set up on the initiative of the Government in 1977, with all-party support.

THE COUNTRY Diary which appeared on Page 22 yesterday, was a repeat of one that had been used earlier. Sorry.

It is the policy of the Guardian to correct errors as soon as possible. Readers may contact the office of the Readers' Editor by telephoning 0171 239 9589 between 11am and 5pm. Monday to Friday. Surface mail to Readers' Editor, The Guardian, 119, Farringdon Road, London EC1R 3ER. Fax: 0171 239 9897. E-mail: reader@guardian.co.uk

A Country Diary

NORTHUMBERLAND: This week the Northumberland Wildlife Trust held its AGM at Otterburn, by invitation of the Ministry of Defence, which since 1911 has managed 58,000 acres of this upland area of our county. The range officer and land agent explained to us how farming, forestry, constructive wildlife and public access are managed on this estate, whose primary purpose is safe military training. During the lambing period, mid-April to mid-May, mili-

tary manoeuvres and firing are suspended. Local contractors are brought in whenever possible for heavy work, so the local economy benefits, and the army personnel have good relations with the local community. Last year a nest of peregrine falcons and two broods of merlins were plundered by thieves, the merlin chicks being three weeks old when taken. The MoD has retaliated by mounting an operation with undercover surveillance using soldiers trained in covert techniques to protect the vulnerable area, which is monitored by ornithological experts. Everything possible is being done to prevent robberies like these being repeated. Red grouse numbers are stable, the birds perhaps benefiting from the plentiful grit thrown up by firing. A black grouse regeneration project has also been launched. The project will mean cutting down on sheep grazing to help vegetation to regenerate and vermin will need to be culled. There are 12 Sites of Special Scientific Interest on these ranges, among them ancient hay meadows and oak woodland.

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Sam Cummings Have guns, will travel

SAM Cummings, who has died aged 71, was the world's biggest dealer in small arms. His company, Interarms, sold weapons to the Dominican Republic, Cuba, India, Pakistan, the Philippines and many other countries. The company operated with the strict maxim that the law of both the selling country and the purchasing country must be obeyed. No doubt existed that this was often facilitated by the US government as an act of foreign policy: it was better the surplus weapons were handled by someone it could trust and shipped only to "friendly" countries. At one time the company held the largest stocks of small arms in the world, more than enough to equip a small army.

Cummings was born in Philadelphia, USA. His father, of Irish immigrant stock, suffered badly in the Wall Street crash and died when Sam was only eight. The family moved to Washington and with the US's entry into the second world war, Sam was drafted. He finished up as a sergeant weapons instructor at Camp Lee, Virginia.

Taking advantage of the GI Bill, he went to George Washington University and spent a term at Oxford. This allowed him to travel around Europe, where he saw vast amounts of war surplus weapons. He was taken on by the fledgling CIA as a weapons expert and during the Korean war travelled extensively viewing weapons.

At this point fact and fantasy become inexorably intertwined. He was reputed to be the agency's most cunning arms dealer, pretending to be a Hollywood producer wanted to buy guns as props, he bought \$100 million worth of German arms and shipped them to Chinese Nationalists in Taiwan. When I went to a military show in the US, one of Cummings's close friends told me that Cummings had left the CIA and with a guaranteed bank loan had purchased the CIA's surplus stock of small arms (for the government had instructed the CIA to get out of the weapon sales game). Others said that, fortuitously a year after his departure in 1963, a CIA-backed coup in Guatemala led to Cummings being given the arms contract for the new government.

The formation of the International Arms Corporation in 1963 was the start of the Interarms group of companies. Among the better known are Hunter's Lodge in the US and Churchill, Whitworth Rifle Company, Cogswell and Harrison in the UK. Some of these no longer exist but Interarms in Manchester remains, and was for a long time the main outlet for the Cummings empire. He did not discourage speculation about his links to the CIA, calling one of his compa-

nies Cummings Investment Associates. A visit to Hunter's Lodge was, for the gun enthusiast, like being in Aladdin's cave. Everywhere there were racks of small arms of every sort of small arm.

Cummings was so successful in the US that the Gun Control Act, banning the import of weapons, was introduced in 1968. It was strongly supported by the gun trade, which believed that imports restricted home-manufactured weapons sales. Not true, said Cummings: "I sell to those with a little money and they trade up to the higher priced home manufactured products." Nonetheless he made a fortune by stockpiling 700,000 weapons at his warehouse on the Potomac River in Virginia before the act was passed.

Friends and employees are unanimous in praise of Cummings. His reputation of being careful with his money was, according to employees, one more story that is more fiction than fact. He was a good family man. He moved to Europe, took British citizenship and, with his wife Irma and twin daughters, had houses in the Swiss Alps and Monaco.

He leaves Irma and his daughters.

Sandy Cornack

Samuel Cummings, arms dealer and businessman, born February 7, 1927; died April 29, 1998



Cummings... cunning way with arms deals

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Finance Guardian

£2bn health warning for insurers

Pauline Springett

THE Office of Fair Trading yesterday threatened private health insurers with tough regulation after lambasting them for confusing consumers with the complexity of their policies.

The warning came after the industry's "dismal" failure to improve its performance in the wake of a critical report from the OFT last year.

John Bridgeman, Director-General of Fair Trading, said that innovation within the sector had resulted in more complex policies.

While these may have given the appearance of fierce competition, they had done little to improve the lot of consumers.

Mr Bridgeman claimed that customers were paying more than necessary to insure themselves and that sometimes they were sold inappropriate policies.

He added that the Association of British Insurers, which represents the industry, was not well placed to draw up standards to help consumers make comparisons.

If the industry fails to produce a code of conduct by September 30, Mr Bridgeman plans to call for stronger regulation by the new super-regulator, the Financial Services Authority.

What you should be offered

The OFT say standard health-care policies should clearly state common benefits and terms, including:

Typical Private Medical Benefits
In-patient and day-patient care; treatment at a selected hospital — 100 per cent; treatment in NHS pay-bed — 100 per cent; hospital accommodation for parent accompanying an insured child under age 9 — 100 per cent if sharing room; radiotherapy & chemotherapy — 100 per cent.

He said: "The response of the £2 billion industry to recommendations in my 1996 report was dismal. Most of

the recommendations sought the industry's involvement in improving self-regulation but the response, on the whole,

Permanent Health Insurance
Purpose: to provide an income in the event of accident or sickness resulting in incapacity, subject to conditions such as the policy's termination age.

Critical Illness Insurance
Purpose: to provide benefits in the event of accident or sickness which results in the assured having a specific critical illness, subject to conditions such as: no income replacement payable if the critical illness arises in the three months after pregnancy or childbirth.

was negative. Disappointingly, no convincing alternatives were proposed. Health insurers have not shown

much concern for improving the information, choice and service to their consumers."

The 1996 report also called

for insurers to abandon the sale of so-called moratorium insurance. This insurance gives cover without insisting on a medical examination, but it prevents claims to for treating pre-existing medical conditions for a period, usually two years.

Mr Bridgeman softened his stance on moratorium insurance yesterday. He no longer demanded a total ban but made it clear he was still very unhappy. He is calling for insurers to improve the information they provide to customers buying moratorium insurance so as to make it clear exactly what people can claim for and when.

The ABI welcomed the change of heart, but Mark Bo-

least, the association's director-general, questioned the main thrust of the report.

"There seems little evidence of consumer research in the report to back up some of the recommendations which are fundamental to the industry," he said.

Bupa, Britain's largest health-care insurer, with 40 per cent of the market, said: "We disagree with the OFT's assertion that health insurers have shown no concern for improving information, choice and service to customers."

Private health-care insurance is highly lucrative and growing rapidly as people seek an alternative to the National Health Service.

Rising wages fuel stagflation fears

Mark Atkinson
Economics Correspondent

FEARS of stagflation — a combination of sluggish economic growth and rising inflation — intensified today as a business survey showed wage pressures in industry were still rising while exports plummeted.

Pay settlements in engineering averaged 3.7 per cent in the three months to the end of April, up from 3.5 per cent in the three months to the end

of March, according to the Engineering Employers' Federation. It blamed skills shortages, falling unemployment and rising inflation.

The data followed a warning on Wednesday by Bank of England Deputy Governor Mervyn King that "stubbornly buoyant" consumption and high wage deals may require a further rise in interest rates if the Government's inflation target is to be met.

A separate survey published yesterday by the Confederation of British Industry showed export orders at the

lowest level for 15 years, due to the strength of the pound.

Sudhir Jansankar, the CBI's associate director of economic analysis, said: "The strong pound is still hitting exporters hard, even though it has fallen from its recent high against the German mark. Domestic orders have held up, but this has not been enough to offset the fall in exports."

The pound closed last night in London at \$1.6317, up from \$1.6302.

The CBI said order books fell in May at their fastest rate

for two years, with a balance of 17 per cent of manufacturers reporting business below rather than above normal.

Kate Barker, the CBI's chief economic adviser, said hefty wage settlements in industry reflected the relative strength of certain high value-added sectors, including engineering and one-off factors, such as the shortage of IT staff to reprogramme computers ahead of the millennium and the introduction of the euro.

There were also measurement problems in the chemical sector which suggested

recent figures showing almost 5 per cent growth in whole economy average earnings — above the 4.5 per cent level which the Bank regards as compatible with its 2.5 per cent inflation target — could be revised downwards.

The CBI said it expected wage pressures to abate as the economy slowed during the course of the year, prompting a cut in interest rates to 7 per cent from 7.25 per cent by December and further reductions to 6.25 per cent next year.

Its best guess was that the

economy was on course for a soft landing, with growth decelerating to 1.6 per cent by the end of the year before picking up during 1999, and unemployment continuing on a downward trend.

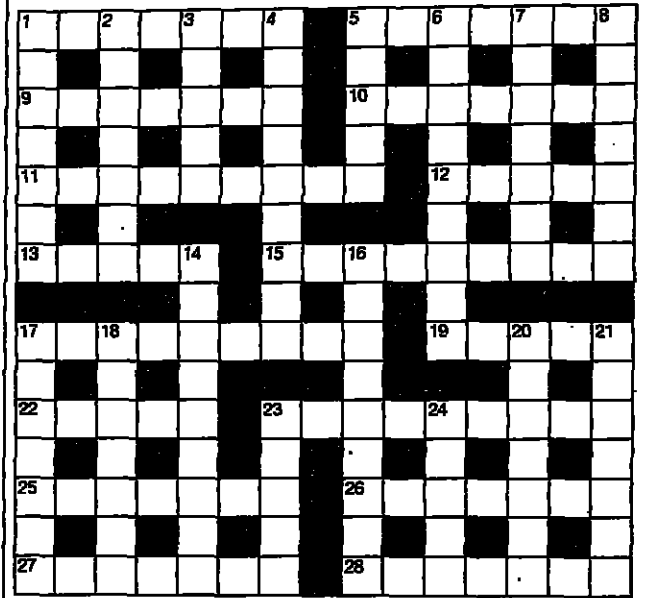
However, it predicted the loss of 100,000 jobs in manufacturing between now and the end of next year. Most of these would be in the commodity-based manufacturing sectors, such as textiles, where profit margins had been squeezed dry by the strong pound, Ms Barker said.

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Cyprus 0.83	Ireland 1.1228	Norway 12.04	Switzerland 2.34
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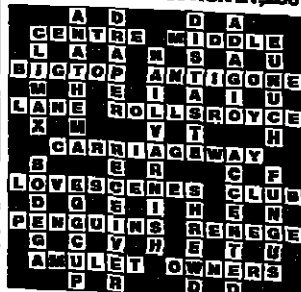
Across

- 1 A fish photographer (7)
- 3 Rant and blow up a high-minded individual (7)
- 9 Farmers giving military personnel spare produce (7)
- 10 Delayed accepting further small-size clothing (7)
- 11 Always wanting a goal (9)
- 12 He composed the final letter in the series (5)
- 13 In the main one thoroughly enjoys such music (5)
- 15 Sum granted to construct ocean wall (9)
- 17 The cleaner coloured admitting the French quack (9)
- 19 Gas with a painter fellow (5)
- 22 Possibly alter this — but not yet (6)
- 23 The floor imbibing a drop got aggressive (6,3)
- 25 A man producing impressive results (7)
- 26 An old city — though it may be part new (7)
- 27 Love poetry written by egghead bees (7)
- 28 Passed a note with drinks to a journalist (7)

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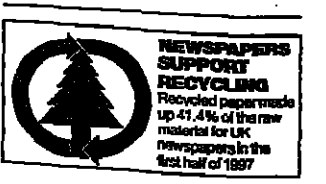
- 1 Doctor keeping issue out of press (7)
- 2 Leave a musical group with no backing (7)
- 3 The City's into food and scrap (5)
- 4 Stand out against insect repellent (9)

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Jobs cut after Centre Point buy-out

Larry Elliott
Economics Editor

THE Confederation of British Industry has been forced to shed nearly a third of its staff to cut a deficit which has ballooned to £7 million.

The cash drain has been caused by the organisation buying itself out of a 45-year lease at London's landmark office block Centre Point.

Ever since arriving to front the CBI three years ago, director-general Adair Turner was intent on ridding it of what property analysts consider one of the least impressive pieces of business conducted over the past 20 years.

Centre Point was built by the property speculator Harry Ryans in the late 1950s but left unoccupied until the CBI became its first major tenant in 1979. The CBI committed itself to occupying 13 floors of Centre Point — some of which was sub-let — until 2004. Considered a good deal at a time of high-inflation, it became increasingly burdensome as the years passed.

Mr Turner decided the best option would be to take over refurbished offices on the bottom two floors.

As a good CBI member, Centre Point owner MEPC was prepared to enter negotiations but as good business people, they wanted to see the colour of Mr Turner's money.

To pay for the deal, 70 of the 300 jobs have gone and 70 member companies agreed to advance half their subscriptions up until 2003.

Efficiency savings will help bring the deficit down to £6 million next year, and still lower by the time Mr Turner's five-year term of office expires in 2000.



Sir Clive Thompson of Rentokil... strong views on pest control

Thatcherite views infuriate CBI

Keith Harper

CBI leaders were seething with anger last night after new president Sir Clive Thompson embarrassed the employers' organisation by delivering a Thatcherite speech at a meeting with the Prime Minister.

After speeches from Mr Blair, in which he dwelt on his familiar theme of working together, and an

equally pro-Government response from the CBI's current chairman, Sir Colin Marshall, several captains of industry expressed concern that Sir Clive, Rentokil's chief executive, had appeared to undo the good work.

Sir Clive, who takes over in July, was supposed to offer a short, light contribution, but he weighed in heavily with remarks about the rights of the individual which took some

listeners back 10 years. In one section he used the expression "pest control" in what his audience took to be a reference to the unions and a warning that the national minimum wage was not a good idea.

John Monks, the TUC's general secretary, sitting on the top table with the CBI director general, Adair Turner, was noticeably dismayed.

One senior industry leader said yesterday:

"This was not the kind of thing we expected. It cast a pall over the evening."

"Sir Clive might have thought he was trying to be amusing, but it did not come out like that at all."

Another said: "The Prime Minister must have wondered what was going on. Sir Clive's views certainly did not represent the way that the CBI is thinking. What on earth made him speak like that? It did not win him any friends."

A CBI spokesman said that Sir Clive's speech on Wednesday night had been an "off-the-cuff affair".

It had not been subject to pre-clearance and its contents had therefore not been known about in advance.

The spokesman said: "Sir Clive has been attending all the major committees of the CBI, and has never spoken out against our general policy line. He was not being very serious."

Rivals join up for £900m missile bid

David Gow
Industrial Editor

SIX European defence manufacturers, including arch rivals British Aerospace and GEC, yesterday launched a unique bid for multi-billion-pound contracts to supply "invisible" smart missiles for a new generation of fighter aircraft.

It is the first time the six — including Germany's Dasa, It-

aly's Alenia, Spain's Casa and Sweden's Saab — have joined together. The move could prove a catalyst for further consolidation of the European aerospace and defence industry in opposition to the American firms which dominate the sector.

It is also the first time since 1983 that BAe, through its Anglo-French missiles arm, Matra BAe Dynamics, and GEC, through its Marconi unit, have made a joint bid for

a British defence contract. This initial contract, supplying the Ministry of Defence with "beyond-visual-range air-to-air missiles", will be worth £900 million. The Meteor missiles are for the 232 Eurofighters ordered by the MoD.

The contract is due to be awarded early next year. The consortium hopes the Meteor missiles will also order their missile for their 388

Eurofighters and that the Swedes will fit it to the JAS 39 Gripen fighter built by Saab. These contracts would create thousands of jobs across Europe.

However, Aerospatiale, the French state-owned firm, is backing the rival bid led by Hughes Raytheon of the US and based on the AIM-120 missile. Some 8,000 of these have already been produced, mainly for the F-15 and F-16 fighters.

Raytheon said its "lowest cost, lowest risk" proposal would also bring final assembly work to Short Brothers' Belfast plant.

The Meteor partners said it was inconceivable that Britain would decide against the European consortium when the government is promoting the creation of a single European defence company.

"It is not the case that if we win this contract, we will suddenly become one company,

but it will assist consolidation," said Roger Hawksworth, Matra BAe Dynamics deputy chief executive. "It will be a significant catalyst for that."

Peter Richardson, Meteor project manager, added: "Key contracts like this come up once in a lifetime and winning them inside Europe is the key to keeping capabilities and technologies and critical mass going in the European defence industry."



The Meteor missile, which is being offered to the Ministry of Defence by a European consortium competing against US firms which dominate the sector

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